

# PLUCK AND LUCK

COMPLETE STORIES OF ADVENTURE.

Issued Semi-Monthly—By Subscription \$1.25 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York Post Office, by Frank Tousey.

No. 17.

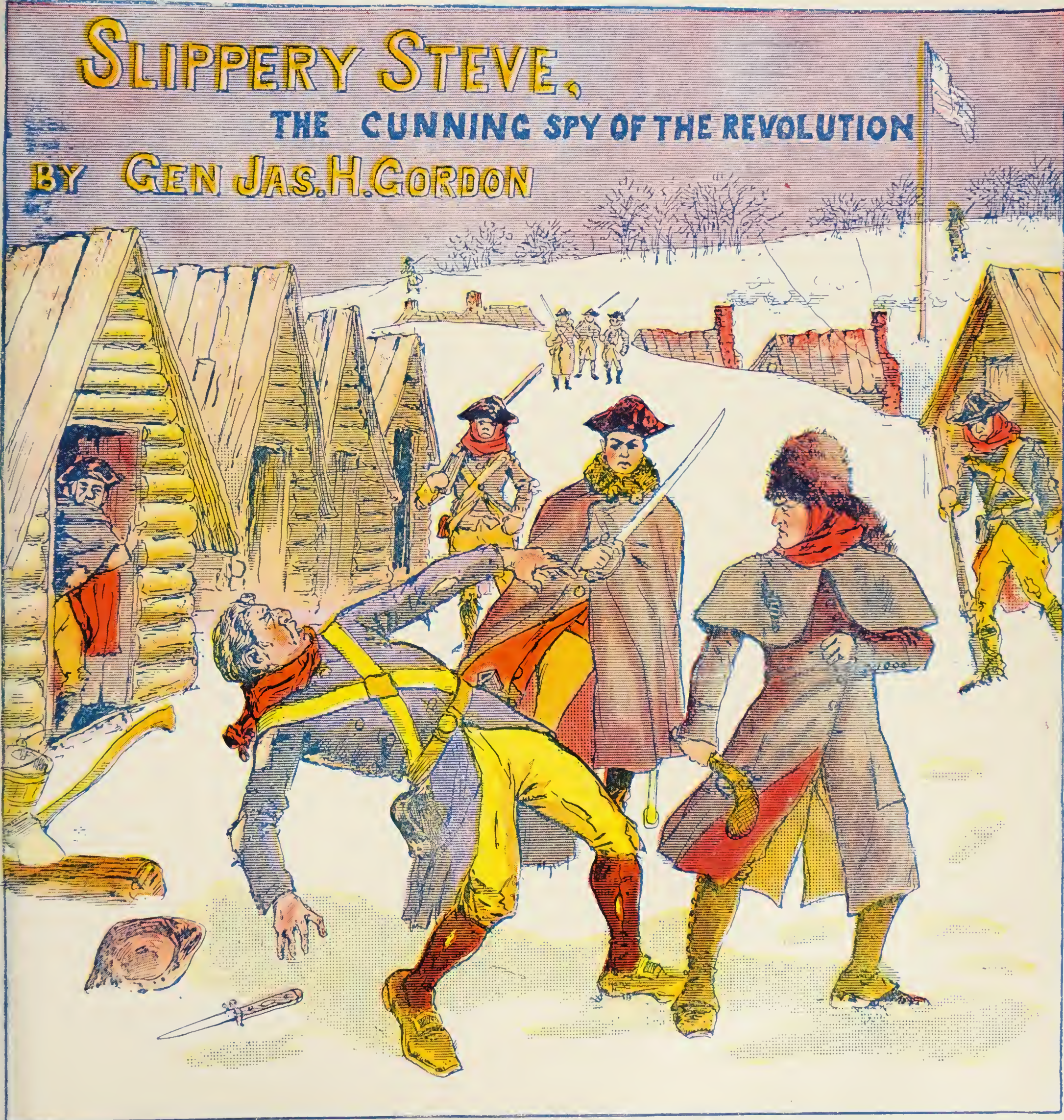
NEW YORK, AUGUST 24, 1898.

Price 5 Cents.

## SLIPPERY STEVE,

THE CUNNING SPY OF THE REVOLUTION

BY GEN JAS. H. GORDON



“Then I won’t shoot!” replied Steve, leaping nimbly aside to avoid the knife in his hand. “Take that and a halter with it!” He dealt him a blow on the side of the head with the pistol that stretched him senseless on the ground. Then he quickly disarmed him.







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*Issued Semi-Monthly—By Subscription \$1.25 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York, N. Y., Post Office, January 12, 1898. Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1898, in the office of the Librarian of Congress, Washington, D. C., by Frank Tousey, 29 West 26th St., New York.*

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## SLIPPERY STEVE,

— THE —

## CUNNING SPY OF THE REVOLUTION.

BY GENERAL JAS. A. GORDON.

### CHAPTER I.

VALLEY FORGE—WASHINGTON AND THE YOUNG PATRIOT—THE TRAMP THROUGH THE MIDNIGHT SNOW-STORM.

THE winter of 1777-'78 was the dark, gloomy period of the American Revolution. It was a brave heart indeed that could look forward to the future with a feeling of hopefulness. The bright dreams of the patriots, occasioned by the defeat and surrender of Burgoyne, in the autumn, had been dissipated by the reverses and terrible suffering of the army at Valley Forge. The historian has never yet wielded the pen that could adequately portray the horrors of that winter's encampment.

Fully four thousand men were unable to leave the camp on account of an insufficiency of clothing, and more than two-thirds of those who did move about left stains of blood in every track made in the snow.

It has long been a mystery to historians how an army, through such circumstances, could be held together under such terrible suffering.

Nothing but the loftiest patriotism and undying love of freedom could nerve men to patiently endure the horrors of Valley Forge.

Every private soldier in the camp knew that in the city of Philadelphia, but twenty-two miles distant, the British troops and American Tories were reveling in all the comforts that British gold could procure. It was an easy matter to slip away from the American lines, go to Philadelphia, and, by taking the oath of allegiance to King George, put gold in their pockets, food in their stomachs, and warm raiment on their bodies.

But those patriots at Valley Forge seemed to have the presentiment that they were to be the fathers of a mighty republic, and that their blood, which stained the snow on the sentinels' beats all around the camp, was the cement that welded together the indomitable spirits of a mighty people.

Notwithstanding their sufferings from cold and hunger, the patriots were compelled to watch the enemy at Philadelphia, because but twenty-two short miles intervened between the two lines. But for his extreme watchfulness, Washington knew that General Howe would several times have made the attempt to surprise his camp. He could only watch his enemy through the eyes of his vigilant, trusty scouts and spies. Of these he had several whose names are inseparably connected with the great struggle for American freedom.

Under the peculiar circumstances of the American army, the patriot spies had a double duty to perform. They had not only to penetrate the British lines and gather the secrets of the British councils, but had also to perform the exceedingly difficult task of preventing British spies from doing a similar work in the American lines.

It was a much easier matter for the patriot spies to move about in

the city of Philadelphia, where lived thousands of people not connected with the army, than for the British spies to penetrate the American encampment at Valley Forge.

In the month of January, 1778, the American commander, wrapped in a military cloak, which effectually concealed his identity, was standing in a driving snow-storm at the hour of midnight, not many paces distant from the beat of one of his ragged, shivering sentinels. By his side stood a young man whose form was enveloped by a nondescript coat, such as a poverty-stricken farmer would wrap himself in during a blizzard. The contrast between the two men was very marked. The form of the commander-in-chief towered above that of his companion like that of a giant. He was six feet two, as straight as an arrow, and square and massive in build. His companion was not over five feet eight in height, but was evidently lithe and active. They spoke in low tones, as if they feared the flying snow would carry their words to those not intended to hear them.

"It is a terrible night, Stephen," said the commander-in-chief.

"I have seen worse, your excellency," replied the young man.

"So have I, but then I was under shelter. Before morning I think you will find it the worst you have ever seen. You do not fear to go, do you?"

"No, your excellency, I fear nothing. I know the way sufficient to prevent my going astray."

"Stephen," said the general, taking the young man's hand in his own, "you think that the fate of this army rests upon my shoulders, but I assure you that, in undertaking this mission, it lies more on your shoulders than on mine. So, be vigilant, yet cautious and cool, avoiding unnecessary dangers, and, at the same time, hesitate not to discharge your whole duty, even though the odds may be terribly against you. You may go now, and may the God of battles guide and protect you!"

The young man returned the pressure of the general's hand, pressed it to his lips with reverential affection, and then turned on his heel and approached the sentinel, who promptly challenged him, and to whom he gave the necessary responses. The guard allowed him to pass, and, in a few moments, his form was hid from view in the driving storm.

The stalwart figure in the military cloak stood silent as a statue till the young man could no longer be seen. Then he turned on his heel and moved away, with a stately step, back toward his own cheerless headquarters.

Stephen Stone, the stanch young patriot, who was now risking his life for the cause of his country, in trying to aid a cherished scheme of the commander-in-chief, was familiar with every foot of the country between Valley Forge and Philadelphia. There was scarcely a



tree or a rock thereabouts but what was known to him. He had hunted over the hills and in the valleys, and fished on both banks of the Schuylkill. Hence, even on that dark night, when he slipped away from the army of the suffering patriots, he had no fears about losing his way.

The night was intensely dark, and the fierce wind sent blinding sheets of snow, as if it cherished a malignant hatred against him. The cold, too, was very bitter, but the wind being at his back, he pulled the collar of his great coat up about his ears and trudged along as if he entertained a supreme contempt for the wind, the cold, and the snow.

"Blow away!" he muttered—"I am going through. I have seen worse than this, and, having it at my back, I care little for it. But if the snow gets much deeper I shall not be able to reach the city before sunrise."

The wind shrieked and howled through the trees overhead and sent the snow flying in great drifts in his pathway. At one place, where his path made a sudden descent through a small ravine and then rose abruptly over a hill beyond, he found it filled with drifted snow. He advanced until the snow was up to his armpits. He halted, for he knew the spot well. He turned and retraced his footsteps. To go forward would bury him in a drift over ten feet in depth.

"I will need a bridge to cross this," he muttered, looking to the right and left. "How am I to get over? This is something I hadn't thought of."

At last the thought struck him that if he would follow the ravine about a hundred yards he would find it curving around towards the north, where the wind could sweep through the gorge.

No sooner did the thought occur to him than he turned and proceeded in that direction, and, to his great joy, found that he had not miscalculated. The wind whistled fiercely around the hill through the gorge, leaving the ground bare in many places.

He crossed over the ravine, made the brow of the hill on the other side, and turned again towards the path he had been following. The cold was so intense that he heard the trees crack all around him as though their frozen fibers had been burst asunder. Yet, by his vigorous steps and the constant motion of his body, he kept his blood in active circulation. He well knew that to stop was to freeze to death, and that to perish now would be a terrible calamity for the army at Valley Forge.

By and by he had reason to be thankful that the wind blew so fiercely, for had it remained still, the heavy fall of snow would have been a terrible impediment to his progress. As it was it blew the snow out of his path, leaving drifts only in sheltered nooks and in the hollows.

In one instance he ran with great speed for a couple of miles. The exercise warmed him up, and at the same time carried him nearer his destination.

At last, a little while before daybreak, he reached the western bank of the Schuylkill river, which separated him from Philadelphia, where lay the British army in fancied security.

There was no bridge across the Schuylkill in those days, and people crossed by means of a rude ferry kept by an old Quaker.

Slippery Steve knew him well, and, though he was reckoned a patriot, he greatly mistrusted him.

About a mile above the old Quaker's ferry stood a small double log-cabin in the midst of a small farm. Thither the young spy bent his footsteps.

"I know John Goodman for a stanch patriot," he said to himself, "and, if he has a boat, he will put me on the other side though this wind was blowing pitchforks."

On reaching the cabin he found it wrapped in darkness, with the snow drifted many feet in depth on the south side of it.

Marching boldly up to the door, he gave three loud and distinct raps upon it. A minute later he heard a voice at the keyhole, asking:

"Who is it?"

"It is Steve Stone, John," replied the spy.

The door flew open.

"Come in, Stephen, for thee must be very cold."

"Yes, Friend Goodman, I have come twenty miles through this storm."

"Thou art a very tough man, Stephen, and the business must be urgent that calls thee out on such a night as this."

"Ah, you may well say that, Friend Goodman, for my business is so urgent that I must reach the other side of the river within an hour."

"That is a dangerous undertaking, Stephen."

"So it is, Friend Goodman, but I have promised General Washington to do it at all hazards."

"Stephen," said the Quaker, in a grim tone of voice, "tell George that, while John Goodman is a man of peace, he loves his country and will aid him against the men of blood, even though his life shall pay the forfeit. I will put thee on the other side of the river, and will give thee meat and drink before we go."

"Ah, Friend John," said the spy, "I knew on which side your heart lay. Were you not a man of peace, you would be a terrible man of war."

The Quaker struck a light, and soon produced some meat and bread, which he set before the young patriot, who lost no time in disposing of it. By the time he was through eating, the Quaker was dressed and ready to accompany him out to the river.

When they reached the boat, which was concealed under the overhanging branches of a tree, they found the river filled with floating ice.

"It will be hard work," said the Quaker.

"So it will," assented Steve, "but we will cross for all that," and then he leaped into the boat, followed by sturdy John Goodman.

## CHAPTER II.

### IN THE ENEMY'S LINES.

As young Steve entered the boat he picked up an oar and seated himself at the farther end.

"Lay down the oar, Stephen," said the Quaker. "Thee can do nothing with it. It would only be broken by this floating ice."

"How will we get across, then?" Steve asked.

"By means of the pole and hook," was the reply, and, seizing a long pole which hung suspended from one of the overhanging limbs of the tree, the old Quaker stood up in the boat and boldly pushed off from the bank.

On one end of the pole was fixed a sharp steel point, with a hook attached by means of which he could either push or cling to the floating ice. The result justified the correctness of his judgment about using oars against the ice, for though the river was not wide at that point, he was compelled to battle for three-quarters of an hour ere he reached the opposite bank.

"Friend Goodman," said Steve, as he leaped ashore, "you have done me a good service to-night, for which I thank you from the bottom of my heart."

"Say nothing about it, Stephen," returned the Quaker, "but go and do thy whole duty, and may God preserve thee from the hands of the men of blood! When thee comes again, blow three times upon thy fingers, and I will know who it is."

"I will do so, Friend Goodman, and now I am off," and with that the young spy turned away, and was soon lost to view in the surrounding darkness.

The old Quaker then sturdily fought his way back across the river and concealed his boat as before.

Young Steve had not far to go ere he struck the line of sentinels of the British army. Well disciplined as the redcoats were, no sentinel could bring himself to believe that an enemy would be abroad on such an inclement night. Hence he was more careful in protecting himself from the storm and the biting cold than in watching over the safety of his sleeping comrades.

The young patriot crept up under a tree which stood but a few paces from the sentinel's feet, and watched the redcoat as he moved to and fro. He saw that he was muffled up head and ears, and that, if he used his eyes at all, it was simply to see that he was not wandering from his post.

"Ah," muttered the spy to himself, "I shall not have to kill him, for, when his back is turned, I can easily slip across. If a sentinel is found dead on his post, the presence of a spy in the camp is at once suspected. I will bide my time and slip across, and thus give no cause for suspicion."

The sentinel passed by the tree several times, and the young spy peered around at him with the keen vigilance of a hawk. At last the time came for him to move, and he quickly darted across the line a few paces behind the unsuspecting sentinel.

The next moment he was protected by the darkness, and was thus safely across the line.



"That was easily done," muttered Steve to himself; "much easier than I expected it would be. It must be pretty near daybreak. Ah! I hear a cock crowing. He is as good as any clock. I must reach Simms' house before it gets too light."

Pushing his way through the snow, he soon reached the suburbs of the city, passing a number of houses, the lights in the kitchen windows of which told him that thrifty housewives were up preparing the meal for those whose avocations called them early from home.

He seemed to know every street through which he passed, for he slackened not his pace till he arrived in front of a house almost in the heart of the city. In front it appeared to be wrapped in total darkness, but, passing around to the rear, he saw a light through the kitchen window.

He tapped on the window. The kind, motherly face of a woman appeared. He tapped again. The window was opened.

"Who is it?" the woman asked.

"It is Steve Stone," replied the young patriot.

"Why, mercy on us, Stephen!" exclaimed the woman, in a very sympathetic as well as surprised tone of voice; "you must be frozen. Come around to the door."

When he reached the kitchen door he found it open, and the good woman grasped him by the hand and pulled him within.

"Why, Stephen," she exclaimed, "what does this mean? Where have you been?"

"I have been out in the storm," he replied.

"Ain't you almost frozen?" she asked.

"Oh, no," he replied, standing on the great kitchen hearth, and shaking the snow from his clothes. "I have had exercise to keep me warm."

She brought a chair and seated him before the fire. A few moments later a man entered the room. It was Robert Simms, the husband of the woman, a stanch patriot and personal friend of young Steve.

"Why, Steve, my boy, how are you?" greeted Simms. "Where do you come from now?"

The young spy leaned forward and whispered:

"From Valley Forge."

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Simms; "you must have trudged through the snow all night."

"I did," was the reply, "and you know what I came for."

The two men looked each other in the eye, and Simms nodded his head affirmatively.

An inner door opened and a beautiful young girl, about eighteen, entered the room, but stopped suddenly on finding a third party present.

The next moment she sprang forward and exclaimed:

"Why, Steve, is it you?"

"Yes," he replied, extending both hands, "it is me, Becky."

They were great friends—Rebecca Simms and Stephen Stone, and the happy light in their eyes convinced the father and mother that in their hearts there existed a stronger sentiment than that of friendship for each other.

"Have you come far, Stephen?" Rebecca asked.

"Only twenty miles," he replied.

"Mercy on me!" exclaimed Becky; "how cold and hungry you must be!"

"Indeed, I am neither, for I had a breakfast an hour ago, and this warm fire has driven the chill out of my bones."

"Still, a good cup of hot coffee," said Mrs. Simms, "will make you feel warmer," and both mother and daughter set about preparing the morning meal.

Robert Simms soon caught the eye of the young patriot, and motioned to him to follow him into the next room. Steve did so, and the two sat down in the dark and carried on a whispered conversation for several minutes.

"I do not think it would be safe," whispered Robert Simms, "for you to go to his house."

"Why?" asked Steve.

"Because he is strongly suspected by the British, and his house is continually watched by their spies."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Yes," was the reply. "I know it but too well."

"How, then, can I communicate with him?"

"I suppose I must go to him for you," said Simms, "as I am well known as a relative of his wife. A visit there from me would not be

regarded as suspicious, whereas if a stranger were seen entering the house he would be promptly arrested on leaving it."

"I guess you are right," said Steve. "Go to him and whisper two words in his ears," and he leaned forward and whispered in the ear of his host "Valley Forge," "and then he will speak as freely to you as he would to me. Tell him the general says that the fate of the army depends entirely upon the accuracy of his information, and whatever he tells you bear faithfully in mind, that you may not fail to repeat it to me word for word. Of course, I shall have to remain concealed here until you return. When will you go?"

"I must wait until after sunrise. To go at an unseemly hour would excite suspicion."

"Very well; we will wait, then, till after breakfast."

The two men then returned to the kitchen and joined the mother and daughter, who were busily engaged in preparing breakfast.

With the advent of daylight the storm without ceased. The wind became less violent and the snow no longer came down, but it lay in huge drifts in many places that were thereby rendered impassable.

After breakfast Robert Simms filled his pipe, put on his great-coat, and started out on the errand that had brought the young spy to his house.

### CHAPTER III.

#### "A SPY! A SPY!"—A BATTLE WITH THE ICE.

ROBERT SIMMS was well known among the patriots as one of the stanchest friends of the cause. But, for many reasons, he had been so extremely cautious that but few Tories suspected him. Accordingly, as he wended his way along the streets, several citizens, Whig and Tory, greeted him in a neighborly way.

"Whither are you going so early, friend Simms?" a Tory neighbor asked.

"To Martin Kellogg's, on urgent business," was the reply.

"Indeed! Business would have to be very urgent to induce me to visit his house, friend Simms."

"Why so?"

"Know you not that his house is watched day and night by the king's spies? He is strongly suspected of holding communications with the rebels of Valley Forge."

Robert Simms stopped and looked hard at his informant, as if greatly surprised at what he had just heard.

"You astonish me!" he finally said.

"Do I? I was astonished myself when I heard it. You had better keep away from Kellogg's house."

"But I cannot be suspected. I have urgent business with him."

"But while you are not suspected now, your presence at his house may place you under suspicion."

"I will risk all that, neighbor;" and with that he passed on.

Robert Simms knew all that before. He was playing a deep game. To Martin Kellogg's house he went, and, as he approached it, he saw two men in cloaks moving about and glancing suspiciously at him.

On being admitted to the house he asked for Martin Kellogg.

The head of the house came forward and asked:

"What is it, Robert?"

Robert Simms leaped forward and whispered the talismanic words, "Valley Forge," in his ear and said:

"Steve Stone is at my house, and has sent me for your news."

"Ah! I have no news. Since suspicion fell on me I could gather none. Go to Abner Morris, the Quaker. He will tell you everything."

"Good Heavens! Morris is a stanch king's man!"

"On the contrary, he is a firm patriot."

"Do you really know that?"

"I do."

"Then I will go to him. Does he know the pass-word?"

"Yes, I deputized him to act when suspicion fell on me."

Robert Simms left the house of Martin Kellogg and started on his return to his own residence.

He observed one of the cloaked figures following him. He turned into another street and tried to lose him, but in vain. At last he concluded to return to his house, and let Steve know how matters stood.

Steve laughed when he learned that only one man was on the lookout.

"One man can never stop me," he said. "I will soon leave him



with nothing to amuse himself but the drifted snow. I say, Simms, as I know where Morris lives, we will both go out together. On the street we will go in opposite directions. If he follows me, you can go to Morris'. If he follows you, I will go there. Do you understand?"

"Yes;" and the patriot laughed good-naturedly. "We'll puzzle him. Are you ready to go now?"

"Yes. If I go to Morris' I may not return. I may have to go back, you know."

"Of course."

Steve turned and went into the next room. Rebecca Simms was in there.

The young spy quietly threw an arm around her slender waist and imprinted a kiss on her lips.

"I will come again, Becky," he whispered, and then passed out of the house.

Robert Simms had preceded him. The muffled figure watched them closely and proceeded to follow them, when he saw them part and go in opposite directions. He seemed puzzled for a moment, and looked first at one and then at the other. At last, as if trusting blindly to chance, he started off in pursuit of our hero.

"Hello!" muttered Steve, to himself, "he's after me! Hanged if I don't tell him to follow the other fellow."

Marching boldly up to the muffled figure he said:

"Follow the other fellow. He's your game."

"Eh? what!" exclaimed the man, glaring at the lithe form of the young patriot.

"Follow the other fellow. He's a rank rebel."

"Ah! you are the rebel! I understand the trick, sir. You are my prisoner!" and he reached out and grabbed Steve by the collar of his coat.

"Lord, what a lie!" exclaimed Steve, and the next moment both were rolling over and over in the snow. The man in the cloak didn't know exactly how it happened, but it was the worst shaking up he had ever experienced.

At last he found himself down deep in a snow drift. He scrambled out, rubbed the snow out of his eyes and glared around. The little man he had seized was nowhere in sight. He looked in every direction. He was gone.

"By my soul!" he muttered, "I am nearly twice his size, and yet he handled me as though I was an infant. He is a rebel, or he would not have had a motive for it. Ho! he's a spy! I'll track him through the snow. He cannot get away from me!"

But there were other tracks in the snow along that street, and he knew not which to follow.

He pushed on, however, hoping almost against hope that he would yet run across the little man who had handled him so unceremoniously. But the number of footprints in the snow rendered recognition impossible.

In the meantime, our hero had availed himself of the brief moments allowed him, ere his pursuer could clean the snow from his eyes, hastily turned a corner and made his way along the sidewalk, where a dozen or more had preceded him. He knew his tracks could not be distinguished among the others, and, therefore, did not bother himself on that score.

A few blocks away he reached the house of Abner Morris, the Quaker. A couple of raps on the door caused it to be opened by a tidy, neat-looking young girl.

He stepped quickly inside, much to the young girl's amazement, and shut the door behind him.

"Is Mr. Morris at home?" he asked.

"Yes; my father is in the kitchen," she said.

"Please tell him that I have come from Martin Kellogg, and wish to see him."

The girl knew Martin Kellogg well, and hastened to deliver the message to her father.

The old Quaker promptly appeared, and looking suspiciously at our hero, asked:

"Did thee say that thee came from Friend Martin?"

"I did," was the reply. "But I have come farther," and stepping up to the Quaker's side, he whispered in his ear the talismanic words, "Valley Forge."

The words had a magical effect on the Quaker. He gave a sudden start, seized our hero by the wrist, and led him up a flight of stairs

into a small garret room, the door of which he closed softly behind him and locked.

Then for nearly a half hour the two men stood face to face in earnest conversation.

The Quaker communicated astounding revelations relative to the contemplated movements of the British troops.

"Return quickly, Friend Stephen," said the Quaker, "that George may be ready when the men of blood come upon him. If thy progress to the Schuylkill is blocked, hasten to the Delaware, and there, not far from where the three oaks stand, thee will find a boat and three fishermen in charge of it. Whisper thy words to them, and they will put thee across. Five miles above thee will find another boat ready to put thee back on this side, so thou canst make thy way to the Schuylkill without fear of interruption."

"All right, Friend Morris; the whole British army can't stop me," replied the young spy, with great confidence.

"Be cautious, Friend Stephen, be cautious," said the Quaker, "for much depends on a cool judgment and a brave heart. Thee had better go now, and may the God of battles protect thee."

The young patriot immediately descended the stairs, at the foot of which he shook hands with the Quaker.

As he passed out of the door, and stepped out on the sidewalk, he was utterly dumfounded at finding himself face to face with the man in the cloak whom he had tumbled into the snow-bank only a short while before.

"Ah!" said the man, stopping suddenly; "we meet again!"

"Yes," said Steve, very coolly; "it's a fine morning, isn't it?"

"Very fine, indeed," was the reply, and the next moment young Steve found the muzzle of a pistol within a foot of his nose. "A very fine day for catching rebel spies," added the man. "Once more you are my prisoner."

The pistol being directly in front of his face, young Steve threw up his left arm with lightning-like celerity, knocking the pistol out of his hand and sending it flying twenty feet in the air. At the same time he planted a stunning blow with his right on the man's nose that sent him staggering backwards into the snow. Following it up, he dealt him a second blow which knocked him completely off his feet.

Seeing others approaching, the young patriot turned about and ran towards the Delaware river.

Ere he had gone two blocks the man in the cloak was on his feet, yelling with all his might:

"A spy—a spy!"

That was a terrible cry for a man to hear in the heart of an enemy's camp, and Steve Stone well knew the terrible danger it implied.

Two men in citizen's dress joined the man in the cloak in pursuit. A hue and cry was raised. A few more blocks, and then some straggling soldiers engaged in the pursuit.

"This is close quarters," said Steve to himself. "If I fail to find the fishermen and their boat in their proper place nothing can save me."

He knew where the three oaks stood, and made direct for them.

Several bullets whistled close by his head, and several times he was sternly ordered to halt, but he was not the man to obey orders from any redcoat, and so kept on his way.

When he came in sight of the three oaks he almost shouted for joy on seeing the little boat with the three men sitting in it. Rushing down to the water's edge, he spoke to the men in low, hurried tones, saying:

"Put 'Valley Forge' across the river immediately. Death is behind him."

His words had a magical effect on the three men. They seized their oars as he sprang into the boat, and pushed off from the shore.

The pursuers rushed down the hill and commanded the boat to stop, or they would fire.

"Lie down," whispered one of the fishermen, and all four threw themselves flat on the bottom of the boat.

Several shots were fired, and a number of bullets struck the boat, but did no harm to the occupants.

A short distance above the three oaks another boat lay up on the bank. A half dozen redcoats rushed to it and hurriedly launched it into the water. Springing in, they seized oars, and commenced battling vigorously with the floating ice, in a desperate endeavor to overtake the other.

Now came a trial of endurance and skill. The three fishermen were



skilled oarsmen, and understood how to fight the floating ice. In that respect they had the advantage of their pursuers.

Young Steve stood up in the boat and kept his eye on the redcoats in the other. Whenever they loaded their muskets and were about to fire he notified his comrades, and then all four threw themselves on the bottom of the boat to escape the bullets.

At times the boat would strike plump against a heavy cake of ice and almost capsize.

The skill of the brave fishermen saved them more than once, and Steve had the satisfaction of seeing the distance between the two boats gradually widening.

"Stop, or you are dead men!" came from the pursuers.

"Down! Quick—they are going to fire!" cried Steve.

They threw themselves again on the bottom of the boat, and a shower of bullets whistled over them.

#### CHAPTER IV.

THE ESCAPE ACROSS THE RIVER—THE STRANGERS OF THE HUT—"YOU WILL STOP HERE."

THE reader will, doubtless, recollect the desperate effort of the young patriot spy to escape his pursuers by attempting to cross the almost impassable Delaware through a flood of drifting ice.

Three times had the pursuers fired upon him, and three times had he and the brave fishermen escaped the bullets by throwing themselves flat in the bottom of the boat. Then they would spring up and again commence the struggle against the floating ice.

After the third volley had been fired, one of the fishermen discovered a small, narrow opening in the ice. Turning to his companions, he exclaimed:

"Now is our chance. Pull hard."

They did pull, and the little boat shot forward with great speed, just in time to escape an immense drift of ice that soon intruded itself between them and their pursuers. It was comparatively easy work after that, for the great floe soon struck the pursuing boat, and carried it helplessly down stream.

Another volley was fired, but the distance was too great for any harm to be done.

"You are safe, now, sir," said one of the fishermen, turning to the young patriot.

"Yes, thanks to you brave fellows and the ice," he replied. "It was a narrow escape. How will you return without being captured?"

"Easy enough, sir, when night comes."

"I am sorry to have put you to so much trouble."

"That is nothing, sir, if we have helped the cause any."

"You have helped it far more than you can know."

"We are glad to hear that. Here we are. Now you can leap ashore, sir."

Young Steve slipped a coin in the hand of each of the three men, and thanked them for their assistance. He then sprang ashore and quickly disappeared in the woods beyond.

The three fishermen drew their boat out in the snow, and likewise concealed themselves in the woods, whence they could watch the movement of the enemy's boat.

The great ice floe carried the redcoats a couple of miles down the stream, after which they put back to the Philadelphia side of the river, reluctantly giving up the pursuit.

Anxious to return to Valley Forge with the valuable information, young Stone lost no time in making his way northward along the banks of the Delaware.

He remembered the instructions of Martin Kellogg, the old Quaker, to the effect that he would find another boat subject to his orders. His progress, however, was necessarily slow, for the snow was very deep and the cold intense.

However tired he might be, to stop outside of a comfortable shelter would be worse than madness, for he would soon freeze to death. The instinct of self-preservation, therefore, urged him to a vigorous activity. Hence, the faster he walked, the more comfortable he felt.

At last, after almost incredible hardships, he came in sight of a small log hut a few paces back from the river bank. At the foot of a tree near the water's edge he saw a mound of snow, the shape of which suggested an upturned boat beneath it.

"This must be the boat that Martin Kellogg spoke of," he said to himself. "I'll knock at the cabin and see if any one is within."

He marched boldly up to the door of the hut and rapped loudly upon it.

A stalwart, middle aged man responded, and threw the door wide open.

"Come in, friend," said the host, "for it is warmer in here than outside."

"Thank you, sir; you may well say that," replied our hero, stepping inside.

The host closed the door behind him. Young Steve looked around and found another—a younger-looking man—sitting before the fire on the broad, open hearth.

"Yes," he thought to himself, "this must be the place, for Martin Kellogg said I would find two men there, and here are two."

The elder man eyed him so suspiciously, however, and with such an inquiring look on his face, that he was filled with doubt. The Quaker had not mentioned anything about a hut, and yet it would seem reasonable that the two fishermen would have a hut to protect them from the inclement weather.

"Where do you come from, stranger?" the host asked.

"From below," was the reply.

"From Philadelfy?"

"Yes."

"What's the news down there?"

"Not much of any kind. The snow and the cold keeps everybody in-doors."

"Yes, I suppose it would. But how came you out in the cold?" and the host eyed him suspiciously as he asked the question.

"Important business," was the reply. "Have you heard anything from Valley Forge?" and Steve looked him straight in the eye as he asked the question.

He noticed there was no flash of intelligence in reference to the two words—"Valley Forge"—in the host's eye, so he was convinced they were not the two men he was in search of.

Who, then, were they? Were they patriots, royalists, or redcoats in disguise?

These questions flashed through his mind with lightning-like rapidity, and he resolved to be extremely cautious about committing himself.

"No," replied the host to his questioner, "except a report that the soldiers there are enduring great suffering."

"Ah! I had heard that much down in the city," said Steve. "It must be true, then?"

"No doubt," was the non-committal reply.

"How far is it to Trenton?" Steve asked.

The host started.

"It's quite a distance," he replied. "Are you going there?"

"Yes, very near there. My business is to see a relative—a farmer's wife—who is very ill, and has sent for me. Do you think I can reach there before night?"

"No," was the blunt reply, "not if you have to walk through this deep snow. You had better stop here with us, and take a new start in the morning."

"I thank you, sir, but I cannot lose so much time. It is only noon now, and I can make quite a number of miles before sunset."

"It would be a shorter route," said the host, "were you on the other side of the river."

Steve saw the host watching him closely, but he had perfect control of himself. He appeared to be indifferent about crossing the stream, and remarked:

"Yes; I know it would be a few miles nearer, but I think it would be safer to walk farther than to risk the danger of crossing that floating ice."

"Maybe you are right," said the host; "as the ice is pretty thick on the river."

In looking around the room, Steve caught sight of several articles of British manufacture. He noticed in a corner a couple of muskets with bayonets attached. They were such muskets as were in use in both the patriot and British armies. But the quick-witted spy well knew that native patriots, in a place like that, would have the old-fashioned squirrel rifle instead of muskets. He advanced to the fire and turned his back to it, as if to catch as much of its genial warmth as possible.

As he did so, the other man, sitting before the fire, rose leisurely to his feet, and presented the muzzle of a pistol within a foot of our hero's head.



"You will stop here," he said, in a quiet tone, "and any foolishness on your part will be very bad for you."

"What, in the name of the king, do you mean?" Steve asked.

"I mean that you will stop with us," was the quiet reply.

"Well, why give the invitation at the muzzle of a pistol?"

"Simply because we mean to have our invitation accepted."

"You can rest assured that I never decline such invitations," replied Steve.

"Am I to understand by that that you have had similar invitations before?"

"Well, yes."

"Who from?"

"Well, I met a rebel officer and a squad of soldiers on the Schuylkill not long ago, and he invited me to go with him in just such a way."

"He did, eh? and what did you do?"

"Why I accepted the invitation, of course."

"Where did you go?"

"Why, I went with him up to Valley Forge."

"How long did you stay there?"

"About three weeks."

"How did you get away?"

"Gave them the slip one night."

"Oh, made your escape, eh?"

"Yes."

"You don't like the rebels much, then?"

"Well, I didn't fall in love with them."

The two men chuckled and looked at each other in a puzzled sort of way. The man lowered his pistol and resumed his seat before the fire.

Scarcely had he seated himself well on the rude seat, ere Steve drew a pistol, clapped it to his head and fired. Then drawing another, he covered the elder one with it, saying at the same time:

"Dare to move hand or foot and you are a dead man."

"I will not move," replied the other, hoarsely. "Don't shoot."

"Answer my questions, then," returned Steve. "Who are you?"

The man looked hard at him, but remained silent.

"I am not a man to be trifled with," said Steve. "Answer my question."

The man still remained silent, but glared full at the face of the young patriot.

"One—two—three," counted Steve.

The stalwart host sprang at him like an enraged tiger. Steve fired, and the next moment they both rolled on the floor together.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE STRUGGLE IN THE HUT—OVER THE RIVER AGAIN.

As they rolled on the floor Slippery Steve heard a groan escape his antagonist. His pistol had been knocked from his hand by the desperate man, and then he quickly drew his knife. He was about to plunge it to the hilt in the breast of the foe, when he heard him gasp:

"You have killed me!"

"I am sorry I had to do it," replied Steve. "Can I do anything for you?"

"Who are you?" the dying man asked.

"I am Stephen Stone, of the Continental army."

"I was not wrong then. You are a rebel."

"And you are a British soldier," returned Steve. "I suspected as much. Where are the two men that were here before you came?"

"They are bound and gagged under yonder bed."

"Good Heavens! is that so?" and the young spy sprang to his feet and rushed to the bed in the corner of the hut.

Pulling it away with a desperate energy, he discovered two men lying flat on their backs, bound hand and foot and gagged.

He quickly cut the bonds that bound them, removed the gags from their mouths, and assisted them to their feet. Their limbs were terribly cramped, and they were half-starved.

"Blast him!" said one of the men, looking at the dying Briton on the floor, "if you had not settled him I would cut him up by piecemeal."

"How did it happen?" Steve asked.

"A small party of them came up yesterday, bound and gagged us, and left these two to watch for our boys when they came along."

"Have you been bound since yesterday?"

"Yes, and without anything to eat or drink."

"Then you must be pretty well starved."

"I should say we were."

"Have you anything to eat in the hut?" Steve asked.

"Yes; we have some provisions hidden under the floor."

One of them staggered forward to a corner of the room and removed one of the boards, and took from beneath it a quantity of meat and bread, which he proceeded to divide with his companion.

The dying man beckoned to Steve to come to his side. Steve knelt close to him and asked:

"What can I do for you?"

"You can do nothing; I am dying. I am Captain Hardwick, of the British army. I belong to Colonel Allison's regiment. I would like for you to get word to him telling him of my death, and say that I died for my king."

"I promise you," said Steve, "that I will see your colonel and repeat your words to him in person."

"I thank you," said the dying man. "I can now die content."

"I am sorry to see a brave soldier die thus," said Steve.

"It is the fortune of war," was the reply.

A few minutes later a convulsion seized upon him, and he writhed in an agony of pain. Suddenly he straightened himself out as rigid as a statue, gave a great gasp and expired.

"That's the end of him," remarked one of the patriots who had been bound and gagged, "and I hope that every redcoat in America may meet his fate."

"So do I," responded the other.

"A great many of them will," said Steve; "but time is precious. I must get across the river. Do you think you can put me over?"

"Who are you?" one of the men asked.

Steve leaned forward and whispered:

"I am Valley Forge. Do you think you can put me over?"

"Of course we can," was the prompt reply; "but you must eat something first."

Steve then proceeded to help them dispose of the meat and bread that had been taken from its place of concealment.

"Any news in the city?" one of them asked.

"No," he replied; "this snow keeps everyone in."

"You are obliged to cross the river now?"

"Yes, and no time must be lost about it either."

The two men then went out to the upturned boat at the foot of the tree, brushed the snow away, righted the boat, and shoved it into the water.

Steve sprang in, and the two patriots followed him with pole and oars. Then they pushed out from the shore and commenced struggling with the ice for the right of way. It was a hard struggle, but the men battled bravely, and, at the end of an hour and a half, reached the opposite shore.

"You have done well," said Steve, "and have put me across much sooner than I expected."

"We did our best," was the reply, "for what you have done for us. We thought those fellows had you about as they had us, but you were too slippery for them."

"Yes," said the spy, "they call me Slippery Steve."

"Good gracious!" said one of the men, "are you Stephen Stone?"

"Yes," replied the spy. "Who are you?"

"I am Joe Ferguson. I knew you when you were a little boy."

"Why, yes," exclaimed Steve, clasping his hand. "I recollect Joe Ferguson," and the two friends shook hands with great cordiality.

"Steve, my boy," said Joe, "I know the service you are engaged in. Don't let them catch you. I wouldn't like to hear they had strung you up."

"No," replied Steve. "I don't think I would like it either. But good-by, for I must be going," and, shaking hands with both men, the spy turned and strode away westward from the river.

He was now above the enemy's lines, and designed making his way across to the Schuylkill. He found the snow drifted badly in many places, but he strove to avoid the drifts as much as possible, and select good walking, that he might make as fast time as possible.

As he was passing above Germantown he was halted by three men, whom he quickly ascertained were Tories.

"Which way are you going, neighbor?" one of them asked.



"Down to the city," he replied.

"Where are you from?" another asked.

"From over the Schuylkill."

The three men looked at each other suspiciously, for over the Schuylkill was in the direction of Valley Forge.

"How far over the Schuylkill?" one of them asked.

"Look here," said Steve, "let me ask you some questions. Who are you? Where have you been? Where are you going? Are you rebel or loyal? Can you answer those questions?"

"Yes," replied one of the men, "we could if we choose, but we don't."

"Neither do I choose to answer any more questions. I am on my way to report to General Howe, and to no one else."

"Oh! then you are a king's man?" exclaimed all three at once.

"Of course I am."

"So are we."

"That's all right, then. As I am in a hurry, I'll push on."

So he left them and started as if he intended to go to the city.

"He is one of General Howe's spies," remarked one of the Tories, as he disappeared in a bend of the road.

No sooner was he out of sight of the three Tories than he again turned in the direction of the Schuylkill. He wanted to reach the river before night, knowing he could not see the old Quaker's cabin across the stream after dark.

It was hard traveling for him. In many places he was forced to fight his way through deep snow-drifts, as there was no way to avoid them.

When the sun cast its last rays of the day across the Schuylkill, the brave young patriot was still three miles away from it.

"It is too bad," he muttered, "for I wanted to cross before darkness set in, for then I could have reached Valley Forge by midnight. As it is I cannot find John Goodman's cottage on the other side of the river. I must take the chances of finding a shelter on this side."

The sun went down, the stars came out, and the shadows of night set darkly over the snow-covered earth.

Some distance on his left he saw a glimmering light from the window of a house, and turned his footsteps in that direction.

When he reached the place he found it to be a farm-house, and the farmer's family on the point of sitting down to supper. He marched boldly up to the door and rapped loudly upon it.

A buxom young woman, about twenty years of age, opened the door.

"Will you allow me to come in and warm myself?" he asked. "I am very cold."

"Yes," was the quick reply. "Come in, sir."

He stepped within the door, and, by the aid of the bright fire in the wide old-fashioned fire-place, hastily took in the situation.

He saw a rugged old farmer and his matronly-looking old wife and three daughters, aged about twenty, eighteen and sixteen, with a young son apparently about twelve years old.

In addition to these there were two young British officers present in the brilliant uniform of their rank, one a captain and the other a lieutenant.

Of course every eye was turned upon him as he entered the room. He bowed to the assembly, and then turning to the old farmer, said:

"My horse was shot from under me by parties hidden in the woods some four or five miles above here. Several shots were fired at me, but I managed to escape with a whole skin. Being a-foot, night has overtaken me ere I could reach the city. This is why I seek the shelter of your roof, sir."

"You are a king's man, are you?" the farmer asked.

"I am," was the reply.

"Then you are welcome, sir," and the old farmer extended his hand to him.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE FARM-HOUSE—A RECOGNITION—A TERRIBLE COMBAT.

THE moment Slippery Steve caught sight of the two officers he immediately divined the cause of their presence there. They were evidently attracted by the old farmer's daughters, and the circumstances warranted him in conjecturing that the old farmer himself

was a Tory. Hence his ready response to the effect that he was of the same ilk.

"We were just going to sit down to supper," said the farmer, "and will be glad to have you join us."

"Thanks for your kindness," returned Steve. "Were it not that I see an abundance on your table, I should decline, for fear that my ravenous appetite would create a famine."

"No danger of that—no danger of that," said the farmer, chuckling. "Sit down with us and eat your fill."

He sat down by the side of the youngest daughter—a bright-eyed, rosy lass of sixteen—while the two British officers devoted themselves to her other sisters. As the meal progressed the conversation became general.

"How far have you come, sir," the captain finally asked.

"From Trenton," was the reply.

Steve knew that there was a detachment of the British army encamped at Trenton under Colonel Rahl, and, therefore knew that he would be safe in claiming to hail from there.

"Any news up that way?" the captain asked.

"No, sir; everything is quiet. The storm seems to have put a stop to all military movements."

"You are quite right," returned the captain, "as no army could move in such a snow."

"As for my part," said the young lieutenant, "I do not regret it, for it is more pleasant like this in the company of ladies than to pursue rebels all over the country;" and he gave the young girl by his side a look that caused her to blush red as a rose.

"I think you are right, sir," said Steve, "for Cupid's warfare is far more pleasant than that waged by Mars."

The supper ended, the table was cleared of the dishes and pushed back against the wall; the chairs were placed out in front before the roaring fire on the broad open hearth. They all seated themselves, and a running conversation began.

Steve told them his name was Conway, and from the youngest daughter, who sat near him, he learned that the farmer's name was Grover, and that Captain Manville and Lieutenant Talcott were the names of the two officers. The oldest daughter was named Louise, the second Annie, and the youngest Melissa.

Suddenly Captain Manville turned upon him and asked:

"Did you lose your spurs with your horse, sir? I see you have none on."

"No, sir," replied Steve; "I had none when I started."

"It is rather singular," returned the captain, "that a horseman should have no spurs."

"Not at all," replied Steve. "The nature of my business requires that I shall not appear as a horseman, nor anything else than a plain citizen of the country."

Both officers looked hard at him for the space of a minute.

Steve returned their gaze unflinchingly, and then a smile spread over his face.

"If you will be at General Howe's headquarters," he said, "you may perhaps learn from him or his chief of staff the nature of my business."

"Ah, I beg your pardon," said Captain Manville, "I understand you now. I see you are in His Majesty's service."

Steve nodded his head affirmatively, and the captain added, with a smile and a twinkle of his eyes:

"In making your report to the general I hope you will forget to mention our meeting outside the lines."

"Oh, certainly, captain, but only on one condition, that you do not, by virtue of your rank and brilliant uniform, monopolize all the sweetness of the household."

A hearty laugh followed from all, and as the young patriot was the best looking in both face and figure, the three daughters readily forgave him.

An hour passed, during which time the young patriot became quite confidential with the youngest daughter of the household, and occasionally exchanged a few words with the mother.

Suddenly they were all startled by a vigorous rapping on the front door. Farmer Grover arose and opened it.

"Why, Silas!" he exclaimed, "is it you? Come in. What's the matter at home?"

"One of master's children is very sick," said the man, "and he's sent me over to get some medicine."



Mrs. Grover sprang up, saying she could get some medicine, and quickly left the room.

The man turned to the fire to warm himself, and came face to face with Slippery Steve.

"Why, Steve Stone," he exclaimed, in unfeigned astonishment "yon here?"

"Yes," replied Steve, "I am here!"

"Why, you are a rebel spy!"

Captain Manville and Lieutenant Talcott sprang to their feet.

Steve sprang to the table, where both their swords were lying, drew one of them from its scabbard, and ran Silas through the body, ere any one in the room suspected his intention.

Silas gave a wild, despairing shriek, staggered backwards, and fell to the floor.

The women uttered shrieks of terror, and clung to the two officers for protection.

Steve, however, had both their sabers; only Lieutenant Talcott had a pistol.

Pushing Annie Grover aside, he sprang towards the young patriot, leveled his pistol at his head and fired. The bullet cut a lock of hair from Steve's head without doing him any harm.

The next moment Steve dashed forward and cut him down. Then he stood face to face with Captain Manville.

The officer was unarmed.

"Captain Manville," said Steve, "I am a patriot belonging to Washington's army. I came here to night with no intention of harming any one, but only to seek shelter while on my way to another point. I deeply regret that renegade's recognition of me has brought about this disturbance. You are unarmed and in my power, but for the sake of these ladies, I will desist, spare your life, and take my departure."

"No," said Manville, stepping forward, "I do not want my life at your hands! You have slain my brother officer. I have heard you are a brave man. If you are, you will let me have my sword and give me a chance to avenge his fall."

"Indeed, captain, nothing would please me better," said Steve, "but I would spare these ladies any further infliction of this kind."

"You have slain two in their presence," returned the captain; "it is too late now to be sentimental."

"Very well," replied the young patriot; "there is your saber, take it and defend yourself!"

The officer sprang forward, seized his sword, while the mother and her three daughters stood cowering in the corner of the room, gazing with horror at the two men.

"Gentlemen," cried the old farmer, "I beg you, for the sake of my wife and daughters, to desist."

"I am willing," said Steve.

"No, no," said the officer, making a pass at Steve; "defend yourself!"

Steve did defend himself, and that most skillfully, much to the astonishment of the British officer.

Clash, clash, clash, rung the sabers against each other, and brilliant sparks flew from the polished blades.

Cut—parry—thrust, and the two combatants shifted positions from one end of the room to the other.

The farmer and his family stood with bated breath, watching the terrible scene.

At times the sabers whirled so rapidly that their presence was only known by the flashes of light reflected by the fire on the hearth-stone.

Then, as they clashed together, a stream of sparks flew from them. Back again across the room they fought, and then the point of Steve's saber split the cheek of the British officer.

"You are wounded," said Steve.

"No matter," was the hoarse reply. "Look to yourself."

Cut—parry—thrust, and again the swords clashed together with a ringing sound, and the next moment the young spy ran his saber to the hilt in the breast of the redcoat.

He fell to the floor with a groan, and Steve lifted his hat, bowed to the ladies, and said:

"I am sorry he would have it so," and then passed out into the darkness of the night.

## CHAPTER VII.

### SLIPPERY STEVE RESCUES A PATRIOT.

OUT in the cold, blustering night again Slippery Steve was at a loss which way to go. It was not only very dark, but extremely cold. Coming suddenly out of a warm room into the cold night air caused him to shiver and his teeth to rattle.

"Whew!" he shiveringly exclaimed. "I never felt so cold in my life! Confound that renegade! He has run me out of pleasant quarters, good company, and a chance for reliable news. I am glad I settled him; but where shall I go till morning? I can't get over the Schuylkill to-night. There's no use in trying. But I've got to find shelter or else keep up a vigorous exercise to keep from freezing."

He glanced back toward the farm-house which he had just quitted, and thought of the comfort within.

"No," he muttered. "It won't do to go back there. Some of them would shoot me behind my back. They are inveterate Tories, and would never forgive me for what I have done. There's no telling what a mad woman wouldn't do to the slayer of her lover."

But that shelter of some kind must be had he was sure, and so he turned towards the barn in the rear of the house, intending to seek the shelter there which was denied him elsewhere.

Suddenly he stopped.

"What a fool I am!" he exclaimed. "They would track me through the snow in the morning and arrest me ere I could cross the river. If I go *now*, the wind will cover my tracks with drift snow before morning. Yes, I'll make my way to the river and take the chances of finding some kind of shelter."

Turning toward the river he resolutely wended his way in that direction. The snow was very deep in some places where it had drifted, and thus he had great difficulty in making headway. But Steve was a man of indomitable pluck and energy. He never gave way to ordinary obstacles at any time. Whatever he had to do he generally did his best to accomplish, and seldom failed.

After a three hours' struggle he found himself on the west bank of the Schuylkill river. There were no lights beyond nor on his side, that he could see. He could hear the immense drift of ice grinding as it floated seaward, and instinctively knew that it would be impossible to get across, even if he could succeed in finding the cabin of old John Goodman on the other side.

"I must find shelter," he said, "or I'll freeze before morning. Lord! how I wish I was down in the city with Bob Simms!"

Suddenly he heard a loud knocking and gruff voices a little way down the river.

"Oh, if there are people about," he said, "I can either find shelter or something else. I'll go down that way and see what it means."

He crept along the river bank, guided by the knocking and voices, till he came in sight of a hut. He saw that it was surrounded by a squad of British soldiers.

"Open this door, or we'll break it down!" cried the rough voice of a man, followed a moment later by a noise that sounded like the butt of a musket in contact with a door.

"Open in the king's name!" came the order again, enforced by more blows on the door.

"By my soul!" muttered Steve. "It's the king's soldiery arrested a patriot at the dead hour of midnight. I must see what it means."

He crept up behind a small stable, which was nothing more than a covered pen just large enough to hold one horse. From that position he could hear a little that was going on inside the hut, but could not see anything. He heard the patriot's wife pleading with the redcoats not to take away the father of her two little children.

"Your husband is a traitor to his king," said the officer in command of the detachment. "He has been guilty of giving information to the rebels, and we are sent to arrest him. It will go hard with him, for we have positive proof of his guilt."

The wails of the poor woman were heartrending to hear.

"You should have kept him loyal to his king, Mrs. Hardin," said the officer. "You would have been spared all this trouble and sorrow."

While this scene was going on in the hut, one of the soldiers, more officious than the rest, ventured to inspect the little pen-stable in the rear. He came forward so unexpectedly that Steve had no time to make his escape. To attempt to run away in the darkness would be to invite a bullet in the back. He seldom extended such invitations, and so prepared promptly for another mode of escape.



Drawing his knife—a long, keen-edged blade—he waited till the Briton turned the corner of the pen. Then, by a dexterous movement, he drew the blade across his neck with such force as to sever the jugular vein.

Of course the redcoat sank down in the snow without uttering a word. He let a low moan escape him as he went down, but no one heard it but his implacable enemy.

For a moment or two Steve stood rooted to the spot, as if undecided what next to do.

Then, as if a sudden notion had taken him, he instantly stooped and commenced stripping the dead man's uniform off.

He did the work quickly, and then, as the Briton was somewhat larger than himself, he put the uniform on, exchanged hats, and then stood as a British soldier.

Taking up the musket of the dead Briton, he stalked round the house, and mingled with the others of the command as though he had all his life belonged to it.

A few minutes after he joined the others of the command, the officer in charge ordered the prisoner's hands to be bound behind him and another to hold the cord.

Steve took the cord and tied it round the hands of the prisoner, and then held on to it, as if he intended to keep charge of the precious captive.

"Be on your guard now," said the officer, "or he may make a dash in the dark. A dozen paces from us in this darkness, and he would be safe, unless a bullet should strike him by accident."

"I'll hold to him, sir," said Steve in a low tone of voice.

The order to march was then given, and the little detachment set off toward the city.

Steve held on to the rope that bound the patriot prisoner and marched along, sometimes by his side, and then close behind him.

Watching his opportunity, he whispered in the prisoner's ear:

"I am a friend. When I cut the cord at your wrists, keep a grip on it with your hands. Then when I give you the hint, make a break in the dark."

The prisoner made a sign that he fully understood the situation.

The time for him to make the dash soon came, and so quickly was it done that Steve was the only one who saw it. He did not give the alarm, however, till after Hardin was out of sight, when he created a sort of panic by exclaiming:

"In the king's name shoot him! There he goes!" and darting forward, he fired his musket at an imaginary prisoner.

The others did the same thing, and then dashed forward to see if a chance shot had taken effect.

Seeing that every musket in the party was unloaded, Steve uttered a mocking laugh and plunged away in the darkness in another direction, leaving the astounded redcoats to unravel the mystery as best they could.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### A SHELTER AT LAST.

On finding his prisoner gone, the young officer was beside himself with rage.

"Who had hold of the cord?" he asked.

No one answered.

Then he ordered a count.

One man was missing.

He asked the question again, and still received no answer.

"There's treason here!" he exclaimed.

The name of the missing man was ascertained.

"Captain, Mac is not a traitor. There's something wrong," said the sergeant.

"No," said the captain, "Mac is a true man. We'll go back and see if we can find out something about it."

The detachment marched back to Hardin's hut, and again called up the poor wife and mother.

"Madam!" said the British officer, very sternly. "your traitorous husband has escaped us! Has he been back here?"

"Thank God!" cried Mrs. Hardin, in fervid gratitude.

"Yes," came the sarcastic remark, "thank God we did not shoot him when we arrested him! Have you seen anything of him?"

"No," she replied; "Tom is not such a fool as to return here again soon! Thank God he has gotten away!"

"Silence, woman! Men, search the house!"

"Oh, you may search everywhere," said the overjoyed mother, "but you won't find him here."

They did search every nook and corner in the little hut, but without finding any traces of him. Then they searched under the hut, raising a plank off the floor, and sent a man under there. Outside, however, they searched the little covered pen that served as a stable for his one horse, and thus came across the dead body of their comrade Mac.

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed the captain as he held a torch over the face of the dead; "I understand it all now. The body is stripped of its uniform. Some rebel spy must have cut his throat, put on his uniform, and passed as one of the detachment. That's how the prisoner got away."

Then he went back into the hut to question Mrs. Hardin. She declared, however, that no one else had been at the house for two days past except their own family.

Mac was buried in the river bank, and then the detachment took its departure for the city, having made a signal failure.

As soon as he was out of sight of the redcoats, Slippery Steve at once threw off the British uniform and tossed away the musket.

"It would keep me warm through the night," he said, "but I can't wear the hated color any longer than absolute necessity requires it."

He wended his way back toward Hardin's hut, hoping the wife would place him in the way of finding a shelter somewhere till daylight.

Just as he came in sight of the hut he heard the redcoats coming again. To conceal himself out of the reach of danger was a moment's work. There he lay and listened to all that took place. He heard them leave, and then all was still again around the hut.

"Now I'll go and see if Mrs. Hardin can give me shelter, or send me to one," he said, and creeping forward, he gained the river side of the house just in time to hear a gentle rapping on the front door.

"Open the door, Molly," said a voice. "It's me—Tom!"

"Thank God!" cried the happy wife and mother, rushing to the door to open it.

As Tom entered, Steve sprang in with him, to the utter amazement of both husband and wife.

"Well, I worked that nicely, eh, Hardin?" said Steve.

"Thunder!" gasped Hardin, who didn't know him. "Was it you?"

"Yes; I killed one of the men out back of your stable, put on his uniform and played the game."

Hardin grasped his hand and wrung it.

"I owe you my life, sir. Who are you?"

"My name is Steve Stone. They call me Slippery Steve because they can't catch me or hold me when they do. I am at Valley Forge when at home, and am now out on business for the commander-in-chief. Unless I get across the Schuylkill before sunrise my life won't be worth a farthing."

"Just my case, too," said Hardin, "for after what has happened I must leave my home."

"Oh, Tom," sobbed the heart-broken wife and mother, "what shall we do without you?"

"If I stayed you would have to do without me always," he said, "for they will hang me if they can get me in their power."

"Then go—in Heaven's name go!" she cried, in the greatest alarm.

"I will slip in on dark nights to see you and the children," said her husband, straining her to his heart and kissing her.

She took leave of him in tears, and then he turned to Steve and said:

"Come with me and we'll find a way to get over the Schuylkill at daylight."

During the leave-taking Steve had turned his back to them. Now he wheeled round and said:

"Don't be uneasy, ma'am; your husband will be safe. Here's some gold to keep you from want, and placing several gold coins in her hand, he turned and followed her husband out of the hut.

"Do you know where——"

Tom interrupted Steve by a sudden clutch of the arm.

The next moment two redcoats sprang from the corner of the house and seized them.

"Surrender! You are prisoners!" cried one of the soldiers.



"Of course," said Steve, very quietly, and then the next moment his captor staggered backward, gasping:

"I'm stabbed!" and then sank down in the snow.

At the same time Hardin had engaged in a struggle with his captor. Steve ran to his assistance, and in a moment his knife had settled the other redcoat's terrestrial affairs forever.

"Now let's be off!" said Hardin.

"Don't leave these two corpses here to annoy your wife," returned Steve; "let's throw 'em into the river."

Hardin picked up one and Steve the other, and ran down to the river bank. There they tossed them into the water as if they had been a couple of dead cats.

"Now come on," and Hardin led the way down the left bank of the river till they reached a small hovel almost buried under the snow. He found a passage to the door and rapped vigorously on it.

"Who's there?" demanded a gruff voice within.

"Tom Hardin. Open the door."

"What's the matter?" the occupant of the hut demanded.

"The redcoats are after me to-night, Peter," replied Tom Hardin, "and if this friend here had not aided me to escape, they would have hanged me in less than three days."

They went inside, and the man Peter struck a light.

"What do you want me to do?" he asked of Hardin.

"Put us across the river as soon as it is light enough to see objects on the other side."

"It'll be a hard job."

"Of course it will; but I'd rather risk death by drowning than by hanging."

"Lie down then and sleep, if you can," said Peter, mending up the fire on the hearth till it sent forth a genial warmth.

Tired and sleepy, Steve laid down in front of the fire, and was soon soundly sleeping. He had found a shelter at last, and had no fear of freezing.

## CHAPTER IX.

### BACK AT VALLEY FORGE.

How long he slept he knew not, but, in the midst of a pleasant dream about Rebecca Simms, Slippery Steve was awakened by a rough shake by the shoulder.

"Come, get up," said Hardin; "we must get ready to battle with the ice."

"What! is it daylight?" Steve asked, yawning as though he was still sleepy.

"Yes. Peter has gone out to see if everything is all right."

Peter came in a few minutes later and said that the boat was ready.

Steve and Hardin arose and followed him out. The gray dawn was still struggling with the fading darkness of night. Objects on the other side of the river could be but faintly seen.

A small boat was dragged out from under the snow and pushed into the water. Three poles were in it, and each took one.

"We've got to work hard," said Peter, as he pushed off.

"We'll do our best," said Steve. "I guess we can get over all right."

Then commenced the battle of the ice. The great floating mass of ice ground around them as if eager to crush the frail little boat to atoms. But the three men used the poles with so much dexterity, that the biggest cakes of ice were warded off, and thus they made their way slowly to the other side.

On the other side Steve pressed a gold coin in old Peter's hand. The old man seemed utterly astonished, for he had not seen a piece of gold for many months.

"Peter," said Hardin, "will you go up to the house and tell my wife that I am safe?"

"Yes, I'll tell her."

"All right, then. Good-by."

They both shook hands with the old man, and then turned away.

"Do you know where John Goodman lives?" Steve asked of Hardin.

"Yes. His hut is just a mile below here."

"Ah! Are you sure of that?"

"Yes. I have been there often."

"Let's go there and get a breakfast then."

"Good! We will need it," and he led the way in that direction.

They reached Goodman's cabin a little before sunrise, and found him about to sit down with his family to a substantial breakfast.

"I am back again, Friend Goodman," said Steve, as he entered the door of the cabin.

The Quaker sprang up, and staring at him with unfeigned surprise, said:

"Verily, I am surprised to see thee," and then looking at Hardin, added:

"It was Friend Thomas who rowed thee over the river, eh?"

"No, it was Friend Peter; of course we aided him all we could."

"Yes, yes, Friend Thomas is a good man, and a true one. I know thou and Friend Thomas must be hungry. Sit down and share our humble meal with us."

"Yes, we are indeed hungry. We have had but little food or sleep during the last twenty-four hours. The redcoats paid my friend Hardin a visit last night, and carried him away a prisoner to hang him. But I played 'em a trick that enabled him to get away from them."

"Verily, the men of war are an abomination in the land, Friend Stephen."

"Yes, indeed. But the time will come when they will all have to go back whence they came and leave our people in peace."

"I hope so. I hope so," said the good man, as they all seated themselves at the table again.

The good Quaker's wife was a fine cook, and a bountiful one. She supplied them with as much as their ravenous appetites called for, and then insisted on putting up a lunch for them to take with them.

Armed with a good breakfast they took leave of the Quaker, and started out for Valley Forge.

Steve knew the way, and Tom Hardin followed him with an implicit faith.

They reached the picket line of the patriot army late in the afternoon, and were carried to headquarters at Steve's request.

The moment the commander-in-chief heard that Steve had returned he sent word to have him come to his private room.

Steve lost no time in hastening into the presence of the man on whose stalwart shoulders the destinies of a continent rested.

They shook hands.

"Sit down," said the general. "You have just come in. Surely you have lost no time in your trip."

"Your excellency, I have lost much time, but it was only when I was interfered with by the enemy."

"The enemy did interfere with you then?"

Indeed they did; but they number less than when I started on my mission, for seven of them sleep the long sleep for their temerity."

"You have slain seven men?"

"I have, your excellency, and I have brought with me the witness of the death of two of them."

"No witness is necessary, Stephen," said the general.

Then the young spy made a full report of all he had done during the trip, the news gathered from friends in the city of Philadelphia and at other points.

General Washington was so much pleased with what he had done that he thanked him and shook his hand, saying:

"You have accomplished all I hoped for and placed me in a position to act intelligently. Again I thank you in the name of our suffering country."

"Your excellency, your words of praise are more to me than all the wealth of King George could be," said Steve, the tears coming into his eyes. "Whenever my life is required for the good of the cause I am ready to give it up."

"I hope we may both live to enjoy the fruit of our work," returned the general, rising as if to leave the room.

Steve turned, saluted, and then left the presence of the great man.

Out in the camp again Steve met with many old friends, who were clothed in rags, but they were still dauntless in their advocacy of the cause of freedom.

Tom Hardin also met acquaintances there, but he was astounded at the suffering he witnessed among the patriot troops. He could scarcely believe his own eyes. He could not conceive how men could fight under such circumstances.

That night Steve and Tom Hardin slept together in a miserable tent near general headquarters.



They managed to keep warm under two miserable blankets and the two heavy great coats they had worn into camp.

The next day they both strolled about the camp looking for friends.

Steve found a man moving about in an old, ragged Continental uniform, but with a good pair of shoes on. The shoes were comparatively new, and that fact induced Steve to watch him with unusual interest.

"Tom," he said to Hardin, "I believe that man to be a British spy."

"Why so?"

"Because, when he put on a ragged suit of clothes to be like our men, he forgot to put on shoes to match."

Tom glanced down at the man's shoes.

"They are good shoes—almost new," he said, in a whisper.

"Yes; now tell me how a private soldier at Valley Forge could get a pair of good shoes. It's suspicious, and I'm going to watch him."

They followed him about through the camp the greater part of the day, and saw that he was making mental notes of all he saw and heard.

At last, Steve walked up to him and asked:

"What regiment do you belong to?"

"The Pennsylvania line—first regiment," was the reply.

"Come with me to the colonel; you are wanted."

The man glared at him for a moment, and then sprang at him with a knife uplifted to strike him down.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE SPY AT VALLEY FORGE.

THE suddenness of the attack put Slippery Steve at a decided disadvantage for a moment or two. The savage ferocity of the man showed that he was desperate in the extreme, and that he intended nothing less than the instant death of his victim.

His first blow cut Steve on the shoulder, inflicting a flesh wound, not dangerous nor very serious, but painful in its nature.

"Oh, that's your game, is it?" exclaimed Steve, springing back and drawing a pistol. "Now come on."

He aimed it directly at the man's head.

"Better death by a bullet than a halter," hissed the man, rushing on again.

"Then I won't shoot!" replied Steve, leaping nimbly aside to avoid the knife in his hand. "Take that and a halter with it!"

He dealt him a blow on the side of the head with the pistol that stretched him senseless on the ground. Then he quickly disarmed him, and was about to tie his hands, when an officer rushed up and demanded:

"What's the matter here?"

"I've caught a British spy, captain," replied Steve.

"Heavens! Is that so?"

"Yes, he's a spy."

"How do you know that?"

"By his shoes there. No patriot can afford to wear good shoes now."

The captain was amazed.

"Have you knocked down a man just because he happened to have on a pair of good shoes?" he demanded of Steve.

"Oh, no, sir. I knocked him down because he attacked and stabbed me."

"Did you accuse him of being a spy?"

"No, sir."

"Why did he attack you, then?"

"Because I asked him to what regiment he belonged, and to go with me to his colonel."

"Well, I don't blame him. Let him alone."

"Captain, I know he is a spy."

"Let him alone, sir!" repeated the officer, in very stern, emphatic tones.

"But, captain——"

The officer wheeled upon him, drew his sword, and said:

"I'll place you under arrest. Follow me!"

"Certainly, captain—but arrest him too!"

"Silence, sir! To whose command do you belong?"

"I am in the special service of the commander-in-chief."

On hearing that the young officer turned pale and halted.

"That alters the case. Why didn't you say so before?"

"Why didn't you ask me?"

"I thought you were impudent, and——"

"When it was you who was impudent," interrupted Steve. "I told you I knew that man was a spy, and you arrested me."

The young captain blushed scarlet on hearing himself called impudent by a private soldier, and said:

"I could arrest you now for your language to me, and——"

"And be cashiered for lack of sense," said Steve, who was angry at the interference of the captain. Then seeing the spy trying to make off with himself, he dashed after him, caught him by the collar, and said:

"Not so fast, my fine fellow! The colonel of your regiment wants to see you."

"S'death!" hissed the spy. "I'm never to be taken alive!" and with that he clutched Steve by the throat with both hands.

So sudden was the attack that Steve was taken completely by surprise. The pressure of the spy's fingers on his throat caused Steve's eyes to protrude and his tongue to stick out. In another minute he would go down. He held the pistol in his right hand still, and had the presence of mind to use it. Placing it against the spy's breast he pulled the trigger and fired.

The spy released his hold on Steve's throat and staggered backward, falling to the ground a moment later, clutching at his breast as though a piece of red-hot iron was touching him there.

Steve staggered, too, and it was nearly a minute ere he recovered from the effects of the sudden choking he had received. Then he approached the dying man, now surrounded by half a hundred soldiers.

"You have killed me," said the spy, looking up. "I won't hang, and that's what I tried to avoid."

"You are a spy, then?" the young captain asked.

"Yes—it's all over with now."

Steve looked at the young officer and smiled.

He felt that he had triumphed in more ways than one, and was satisfied. But the young captain could not forgive him the language he had used towards him, and turned away.

The dying spy was taken to the camp hospital, and there breathed his last an hour later.

The news flew through the camp, and soon reached the ears of the commander-in-chief. He sent for Steve and learned the particulars. Steve said nothing about what had occurred between him and young Captain Herring.

He did not care to let the commander-in-chief know that he had spoken disrespectfully to an officer. He knew that Washington was a very strict disciplinarian, and would rebuke him for his conduct.

The general, however, congratulated him on his vigilance, and hinted at a probable promotion in the near future. Steve went away in a gay humor, for nothing made him feel better than to be praised by the leader of the patriot armies of America.

Tom Hardin was a silent spectator of all that had taken place, and was very thoughtful for some time afterwards.

"Steve," he said to the cunning spy, as they walked away from headquarters together, "if any one should ask me to what command I belong, what ought I to say to him?"

"Tell him the truth."

"But he might arrest me."

"True; but he wouldn't shoot you."

Tom laughed.

"I am not afraid of that," he said, "it's only the annoyance. I would like to join the service, but not to go into the ranks. I believe I can make a good scout or spy."

"So do I," said Steve, "and I'll suggest it to the chief of staff that you be sent with me when I go out again."

"I would like that. It would give me a chance to get even with the redcoats for their treatment of me the other night."

Steve's wound did not lay him on his back, but it kept him in camp for a fortnight. During that time the result of his trip to the enemy's lines became apparent.

The British came out in the expectation of surprising the patriots, but found the whole Continental army under arms ready to receive them. They went back to Philadelphia without firing a shot.

In the meantime Steve had succeeded in having Tom Hardin assigned to scout duty, much to that patriot's delight. Tom knew he



could never live at home again till the vicinity was cleared of the red-coats, so he concluded to enlist and trust to luck to provide means of sustenance for his family.

A few days after Tom enlisted Slippery Steve received a messenger who told him that the general wished to see him at headquarters. He lost no time in reporting, and was sent off on a secret mission to the enemy's lines again. He was allowed to take Tom with him, and together the two friends set out toward the city of Philadelphia.

They left at midnight, and reached the Schuylkill, near John Goodman's cabin, about daylight, and surprised the patriotic Quaker as he was making the fire for his spouse to cook the morning meal.

#### CHAPTER XI.

##### THE WATCH IN THE WOODS—DEADLY WORK.

THE old Quaker received them with his usual hearty welcome, and asked after the patriots at Valley Forge.

"They are both starving and freezing. Friend Goodman," replied Steve, "but true as steel all the time."

"So I have heard. George has a heavy heart, I know, but he trusts in the God of battles, and will yet triumph over the king's troops."

"That he will. He was ready for them last week when they came out, and they came back without striking a blow."

"Verily, my heart was glad when I heard it," said the patriotic old Quaker. "Thee must be hungry. We will have breakfast soon. Sit thee down and possess thy soul in patience. Have thee heard from thy family, Friend Thomas, since thee went away?"

"I have not. Have you heard from them?" Tom Hardin eagerly asked.

"Friend Peter was over here the other day," said the Quaker, "and he said the king's soldiers were guarding the house in hopes of catching thee. Thee had better be careful how thee goest about, Friend Thomas, lest thou fallest into their wicked hands."

"I shall be very careful, Friend Goodman," said Hardin, "for I am the only protector my family has, and I am going to protect them."

"Can we get over the river this morning, Friend Goodman?" Steve asked, after they had finished eating a hearty breakfast.

"Yes; we can go over," was the quiet reply.

"The sooner we cross the better it will be for us."

"Then we will go as soon as we get the boat ready."

The Quaker then left the cabin, and Steve and Tom followed him. They were very anxious to get over before many people were stirring.

The boat was drawn out from its hiding-place, and the three men entered it. The ice was still in the river, but not near so much as when Steve crossed three weeks before. They pushed across with all possible speed, and soon reached the east side, where Steve and Tom shook hands with the Quaker and pushed for the wood beyond.

Once in the woods they felt safe from discovery by the red-coats.

"Steve," said Tom, "I want to go up in the woods above my house and see if I can get a glimpse of my wife and children."

"Well, as we can't enter the city till after dark sets in, we may as well pass the time that way. I will go with you."

They set out to push their way through the woods in the direction of Hardin's cabin. When they had gone a little over a mile they came in sight of the cabin. A thin column of blue smoke curled above the chimney, but the door was closed.

"Ah!" sighed Tom, "if I knew they were all well I would be better satisfied."

"We may get a chance to see them all yet," said Steve. "Let's get into that part of the woods opposite the house. If your wife should appear at the door during the day you might be able to give her a signal she could understand."

"That's so, Steve—come on," and the now eager husband and father led the way toward the spot indicated by his comrade.

Just as they approached the place Steve discovered that somebody else was ahead of them.

He cautioned Tom to stop, and then they both began to reconnoiter. They found four men, dressed as farmer's laborers, sitting around a camp fire back in the woods.

"Do you know any of them, Tom?" Steve asked.

"No," replied Tom. "They don't belong here at all."

"At least, you never saw them before?"

"No."

"And you know everybody who lives around here?"

"Yes—every soul."

"Then those men are either redcoats in disguise, or Tories waiting to keep watch for your return."

"Good Lord! do you think so?"

"Yes, I am sure of it, for I see that one of them keeps a watch on your house all the time. Let's wait and see if I am not right about it."

"If they are, I'd like to make away with them, and then spend the day with my family. Don't you think we could do it, Steve?"

"Yes, if we can manage to throw them off their guard."

"We can do that, I guess."

Then they waited in their place of concealment to satisfy themselves that they were indeed watching Tom's cabin. It did not take them very long to be satisfied on that point.

"Now, Tom," said Steve, "we'll be two loyal king's men in search of stray cattle, and pretend not to have the least suspicion as to who or what they are. We have both got a brace of pistols. When we have the best chance we'll blow out the brains of two of them, then draw again and settle the other two."

"Yes, we can do that," said Tom, in a whisper, "and then hide their bodies in the woods till night."

"That's it! Now come on."

The two men went carefully along through the woods, talking as though they did not suspect the presence of an enemy within ten miles of them. The four men heard them, and sprang to their feet to look at them.

Steve and Tom came up, and hailed them with:

"Good-morning, strangers! Seen any strange cows in these woods since sunup?"

"No," replied one of the four men. "Are you looking for cows?"

"Yes. Three of my cows have gone astray."

"Where do you live?"

"About four miles above here. I'm afraid some of my cantankerous rebel neighbors have made away with 'em, as they hate me like pison!"

"You've got rebel neighbors, then, have you?"

"Who hasn't got 'em? I only wish the good king had half as many friends in this country as he has rebels. Last week they stole my best horse, and now it looks as if they intend to get all my cattle. I've been thinking of giving their names to the king's officers in the city, and have 'em all arrested."

The four men had again resumed their seats around the little fire, as Steve and Tom had also taken their stand near it, as if to warm themselves. They seemed to be completely off in regard to the newcomers.

"That is the best way," said one of them, in reply to Steve's last observation. "Get their names and have them arrested. The king's officers will soon make short work of them. Do you know a man among them by the name of Tom Hardin?"

"Yes—but he doesn't live up there. He lives down this way somewhere. I heard as how he was such a rank rebel that he had to leave home to keep the king's men from hanging him."

"He hasn't been up in your neighborhood, has he?"

"I heard he had been there, but that he had gone over the river towards Valley Forge."

"That's what we heard, too."

"Are you looking for him?"

"Yes—we want him."

Two of the four men stooped to mend up the fire. The other two kept their seats on the log. Steve nodded his head to Tom, and both drew their pistols, clapped them to the heads of the two seated ones, and fired. The other two sprang to their feet, only to find two more black-muzzled pistols staring them in their faces.

Crack! Crack!

The four men who had been watching the patriot's house were dead.

#### CHAPTER XII.

##### THE PATRIOT'S FAMILY—OVER THE LINES.

STEVE and Tom looked at each other nearly a minute in profound silence, each with a smoking pistol in his hand.

"It looks like murder, Steve," said Tom, in an undertone.

"But it isn't, though," replied Steve. "It's simply war, and we've laid out four of the enemies of our country."



"Yes, that's what it is," and Tom glanced wistfully toward the little cabin that sheltered those that were so dear to him.

"Don't be in a hurry, Tom," said Steve, as he saw him look toward the cabin. "Let's put these bodies out of the way before we go down there."

"Yes, I know a good place to put them till night. We'll put them in the river as soon as it is dark."

"Show the way," said Steve, taking up one of the bodies in his arms.

"Hold on, Steve. These men were Tories. They never do this kind of work without being paid in British gold," and he commenced searching the pockets of the dead. He found several sovereigns in the pockets of each, to the great surprise of Slippery Steve.

"Ah! I know the rascals!" he said. "Gold is their idol. It now belongs to us."

"Give it all to your wife, Tom," said Steve. "She will need it for herself and children, now that you are in the service."

"Yes, she will need it," and he put it in his pocket, and then turned to and took up one of the bodies.

"Come on," he added, and led the way to a thicket about fifty yards from the camp-fire. There they deposited the four bodies, intending to throw them into the Schuylkill as soon as it was dark enough to render it safe to do so.

Then taking the arms and ammunition of the dead men, they left the wood and wended their way toward the cabin.

All was quiet within.

Tom rapped on the door.

"Who is there?" his wife asked.

"It's me—Tom."

The door flew open and the overjoyed wife and mother clasped Tom in her arms. Then Tom gathered the children to his heart only as a fond father could.

"Oh, Tom!" cried his wife, when the first transport was over, "they have set a watch on the house. Even now four men are stationed in the edge of the woods to——"

"Those four men will never watch another house, wife," said Tom.

"Steve and me have come to spend the day with you, and——"

"Have you killed them?"

There was a look of horror in her face.

"This is a time of war, Mrs. Hardin," said Steve. "Those men were stationed there to shoot down your husband if he should dare to return to you. Tom and I surrounded them, and now we will have no further trouble with them."

"Oh, it's horrible!" and she gave a shudder as she thought of four men lying dead out there within a hundred yards of her house.

But she was so glad to have Tom in the house with her again that she soon forgot that there was any war raging in the land.

The day passed very pleasantly, and when night came on Steve and Tom went out, got the four dead bodies and threw them into the river.

That done they removed all signs of the tragedy, so as to leave the impression that the missing men had deliberately deserted their post, and left the cabin of the patriot unwatched.

About midnight Tom bade his wife good-by and set out with Steve to cross the enemy's line. The entire British army, some twenty thousand strong, was encamped in the city of Philadelphia. Steve was sent to communicate with certain friends of the patriot cause, and Tom went with him to aid him should he get into trouble.

Both men made their way to the lines as carefully as possible, and then waited for an opportunity to slip across.

"We must manage to slip over without disturbing a sentinel," whispered Steve to his companion. "Then the presence of spies in the city?"

"I never thought of that," said Tom.

"A spy runs a great risk, Tom," said Steve, "when he crosses the enemy's line. Death is always sure to follow capture, unless he can manage to make his escape. That sentinel out there is not very alert. I think we can manage to slip over without his knowing it."

"You lead the way, Steve," whispered Tom, "and I'll follow."

"Whatever happens," admonished Steve, "don't use your pistol. Use your knife so as not to create an alarm. Come on, now."

The sentinel had gone to the lower end of his beat, and thus, for a few moments, the upper end was left unguarded in the darkness. Steve at once darted across and Tom followed. Unfortunately, Tom

stepped on a twig that snapped, making a noise quite loud enough to be heard by several sentinels to the right and left. The one on whose post it occurred wheeled and ran back. Steve and Tom ran forward to be out of range of sight. He heard their footsteps.

"Halt!" he cried, and the next moment fired in the direction of the noise.

The bullet flew close by Tom's head.

There was an instant alarm all along the line. The officer of the guard hurried forward with a squad of soldiers.

"Come on, Tom!" whispered Steve, "or we'll get into trouble. This way."

They ran along till they struck a patch of woods. Then they stopped to rest for a few minutes.

"I am sorry it happened," remarked Steve.

"So am I," assented Tom.

"We'll have to be very careful."

"We ought to be, anyhow."

"Yes. Come on. We must go down into the city."

Steve led the way, and in a little while they came to a number of houses and then struck a street, which they followed towards the heart of the city.

"Now, where are we going?" Tom asked, after they had reached the business part of the city.

"To the house of a friend."

"But they will all be asleep."

"Of course. They'll give us a bed, and we'll soon be asleep, too."

Steve never halted till he reached the house of Robert Simms. There he went round to the rear and rapped softly on the window.

Everyone in the house was fast asleep, and so he had to repeat his rapping, using more force the second time.

Rap! Rap! Rap!

"Bob must be soundly sleeping," muttered Steve, as he listened for a sound within.

"He sleeps very soundly under guard of the king's troops," said a strange voice behind him.

Wheeling around he found himself face to face with two stalwart British soldiers, one of whom laid his hand on his shoulder and said:

"You are my prisoner."

The other one said the same to Tom, who quietly waited for Steve to say what they should do.

"I am sorry for that," said Steve, very coolly, "for I am as loyal as any man in America."

"If you prove that to the satisfaction of the king's officers you will be released from custody," returned the soldier. "But it will be hard to convince anybody that a loyal man would visit such a rebel as we know Simms to be, at such an hour as this. Come, you must go with us."

Steve motioned to Tom, and the next moment both men drew their knives and plunged them to the hilt into the breasts of the redcoats. The doomed men, stabbed to their hearts, uttered a groan or two, threw up their hands, clutched wildly at space, and then sank down at the feet of their slayers, dead.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### IN THE BRITISH CAMPAIGN.

THE moment the two Britons fell, a voice that sounded like music in Steve's ear called from the window:

"Oh, Steve, what have you done?"

"Oh, is it you, Becky?" he responded.

"Yes, Steve—and—and——"

"Where's your father?" he asked.

"He is a prisoner. The king's troops arrested him a week ago, and set a watch on the house. Oh, do go away while you can. It's perfectly dreadful!"

"So it is, Becky; but it's war, you know. Where's your mother?"

"Here she is," said Mrs. Simms, her head appearing at the window.

"We are in no end of trouble, Steve."

"Sorry to hear it, ma'am. Hope my call won't make any more trouble for you. Tell me where we can throw these two dead redcoats, and we'll——"

"Good Lord!" gasped Mrs. Simms. "Have you killed 'em, Steve?"



"Yes, ma'am. Couldn't think of letting 'em march me off to the gallows. Wasn't born to be hung, no how."

"Our neighbor is a rank Tory," said Becky, "and he was the cause of papa's arrest."

"Then I'll drop them into his well," said Steve, with a dry chuckle.

"Oh, don't do that!" exclaimed Mrs. Simms.

"Come, Tom, take up that one," whispered Steve to his comrade, and then led the way across the yard to the little fence that separated the two premises. He carried one of the dead redcoats in his arms. Tom followed with the other one. The little fence was soon surmounted, and the well stood only a few paces from it.

The two dead men were dropped into the well, and then the two patriots went back to the house.

Mother and daughter were at the window, filled with horror at what they had seen or heard.

"Say you know nothing about it," said Steve, as he came up under the window again. "We were obliged to do it to save our necks. This is Tom Hardin, my friend, whom the redcoats want to hang very much."

Mother and daughter welcomed Tom, and said:

"We hope you may never fall into their hands."

"So do I, ma'am," said Tom; "but one never knows what's going to happen next."

"What did they have against Bob?" Steve asked, after a pause.

"They say he has been furnishing information to the enemy," said Mrs. Simms.

"Where is he now?"

"They've got him in the old brick house down near the Delaware, below Chestnut street. Do you think they will hang him, Steve?"

"They will if they can, but I am quite sure they can't."

"How? What's to prevent 'em if they want to?" she asked.

"I'll prevent it. I'm going to rescue him, or else hang with him."

"Oh, Steve!" exclaimed Becky, leaning far out of the window, so that her curls brushed the face of the daring spy, "if you do that I—I'll love you all your life."

"That's a bargain," said Steve, reaching up and grasping her hand in his, "though I know you love me anyhow."

"Yes, I do—but—"

"You'll love me more, eh?" he said, interrupting her. "My friend Tom here is a married man, and the father of several children. Don't be afraid to speak out before him."

"Oh, Steve!" lisped blushing Becky, who was thankful that the shadows of night concealed her confusion.

"I will come again before I leave town," said Steve. "I hope you will have a chance to see your father before two days pass away."

"Oh, if you can only help him!" sighed Mrs. Simms.

"I will do my best," said Steve, "so keep quiet and let's see what will turn up."

He reached up and shook hands with mother and daughter, and then glided away in the dark, followed by Tom.

"So that's your sweetheart, is it?" said Tom, as they walked away from the house.

"Yes," was the prompt reply, "and she's the best and pluckiest girl in America."

"She has a sweet voice, and that always makes an impression."

"She is as beautiful as her voice, and then she's a patriot of the first water. I am going to get the news I have come after, and if it is important, will send you back to Valley Forge with it."

"Ah! I shall be glad to do something to win a word of praise from the commander-in-chief. You will stay here and try to free your friend, will you?"

"Yes. Bob Simms will be hung if they find out one half of what he has done for the cause of his country. I am afraid they have got hold of enough to answer their purpose, so I am going to look out for him."

"But where are you going now?"

"To the house of another friend."

They passed down a street several blocks, and turned toward the Delaware. Tom saw that Steve was perfectly familiar with every part of the city.

The gray streaks of coming day now began to shoot up in the east, and the stars slowly faded out of sight. Steve purposely made a circuitous trip in order to give the family of his friend a chance to be up preparing the morning's meal ere he called on them.

When they reached the house, Steve walked round to the rear and entered the kitchen without knocking.

A matronly-looking woman was engaged in cooking breakfast. Her kind, motherly face was glowing from the heat of the fire, as Steve entered.

"Hello, Martha!" exclaimed Steve. "How's all the folks?"

"Why, Steve Stone!" she cried.

"Good Lord, Martha! Don't call my name so loud here!"

They shook hands like two old friends, and then Steve introduced Tom Hardin.

"This is my cousin, Martha Hines," said Steve to Tom, "and Bill Hines, her husband, is—ab, Bill, how are you?"

Bill Hines, the husband of Martha, came in, and the two friends grasped hands.

"Glad to see you, Steve," said Hines, as he also shook hands with Tom. "But they are looking for you."

"Who?"

"The king's men."

"What do they want of me?"

"To hang you, I suppose. They have locked up Bob Simms and several others. So you had better look out."

"You are not suspected?"

"No—not yet."

"Well—give us a good breakfast and then we'll leave, so as not to render you liable to suspicion."

"You shall have the best we have in the house. Do you come from up the Schuylkill?"

"Yes."

"How are our friends up there?"

"They are both freezing and starving, Bill."

"So I heard—but thank God the winter is nearly over."

"Yes—the hardest part is past. But the spirits of the brave men are as undaunted as ever."

Bill and Martha Hines had no children. They lived very quietly in a small cottage, built by Hines himself when he took Martha as his wife. He was a carpenter, and did a great deal of work for Tories and Whigs. He had thus far kept his political opinions to himself, save a few intimate acquaintances.

When breakfast was ready the two patriots sat down with them, and ate heartily of the good things before them.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

##### SPY AGAINST SPY.

THE breakfast over, Steve and Tom prepared to disguise themselves before going out on the streets again. Steve made up as an old man, and Tom changed the color of his hair with a wig, and also put on a beard.

"No one will ever know you now, Steve," said Martha Hines, as she looked at her gallant cousin. "You look like some old grandfather."

"That's just how I wish to look," he said. "They know somebody came across the line last night, and will be on the lookout all day. They will expect to find the party in some kind of disguise, but not an old man. Have you seen Bob Simms since his arrest, Bill?"

"No—they keep him very close."

"Do they claim that they have any evidence against him?"

"I believe they do."

"Well, I'll see what I can find out myself. Come on, Tom?"

They both left Hines' house and went out on the street again.

"Where now?" Tom asked.

"To Martin Kellogg's house."

"You know where it is?"

"Yes—I've been there."

"Is he the Quaker of that name?"

"Yes."

"Then I know him."

"He's true blue."

"Yes—but do the redcoats suspect him?"

"They did not when I was here last."

"We must be on the lookout."

"Of course."

They reached Martin Kellogg's house, and looked around to see if the premises were being watched. Several people were in sight, but they appeared to be coming and going on some errand of their own.

"I guess they are not suspicious of Friend Martin," remarked Steve,



"so we will go in and see him. The sooner we do so the better. Come on."

Steve led the way up to the front door and knocked on it.

It was opened by the old Quaker's wife.

Steve recognized her in a moment.

She did not know him, however, and so glanced suspiciously at him.

"Is Friend Martin in?" he asked.

"Yea," she replied.

He stepped inside, followed by Tom.

"I know thee not, friend," she remarked, "but Martin will see thee. Come this way."

She led the way into the kitchen, where the old Quaker was seated at the breakfast table.

"Good-morning, Friend Martin," said Steve. "I hope you are well."

The Quaker recognized the voice, and replied:

"Yea, I am well, friend, but my soul is grievously vexed lest thy visit bring thee into trouble."

"You know me, do you?"

"Yea—thy voice speaketh thy name with thy first utterance."

"Are you suspected?"

"Yea—we are all suspected. The men of blood encompasseth round about with their spies."

"I am sorry to hear that. I have something to say to you that your friend George bade me deliver."

"Come, then, I will hear it," and the Quaker arose and led the way into the upper chamber, where the reader once saw them together for a few minutes.

Tom remained below in the kitchen with the Quaker's good wife.

"Hast thou broken thy fast this day, friend?" she asked.

"Yes, ma'am," he replied, "we have both had breakfast."

"Then I will put away these dishes," and like the thrifty housekeeper she was, she soon cleared the dishes from the table.

"Have you been troubled any by the king's soldiers?" Tom ventured to ask.

"Yea—they maketh trouble for all them that don't pay tribute to the king."

"Are you and your good husband suspected of not being friends of the cause of the king?"

"Yea—and we know not how soon we may receive a visit from them."

Tom began to think that the chances of being captured by the redcoats were rather numerous, when he heard Steve and the old Quaker coming down the stairs.

They came into the kitchen together.

Steve wore a very serious look on his face.

"Tom," he said, "we are in a trap. The house is surrounded by spies. We may have to cut our way through when we get out on the street. Come with me up-stairs. I want to give you a message for the commander-in-chief, to be delivered in case I fall or get captured."

Tom arose and followed him up-stairs, where he received, in whispers, the information the old Quaker had given to Steve.

"Do you understand it all?" Steve asked.

"Yes, I think I do."

"Then come on. Kellogg says the house is watched night and day by British spies. We must get away before they send a file of soldiers after us."

"If the spies attack us shall we resist?"

"Of course. Capture means death."

They then passed down-stairs again, shook hands with Martin Kellogg and his wife, and then went out of the front door to the street.

Two men in citizen's dress appeared to take notice of them.

"Those two men are watching us," whispered Steve. "They will follow us wherever we go if we can't shake them off. Can't we bluff 'em some way? Let me see. Hang me if I don't go right up and ask them to show me the way to headquarters."

"That would be a good idea."

"Come on, then."

Steve walked boldly up to one of the two men, and asked:

"Will you give me such directions as will lead me to General Howe's headquarters?"

"Yes," replied the man, somewhat puzzled by the request. "You will go down that street three blocks, turn to your left and go seven

blocks. You will then see the big flag that will show you the house. Do you wish to see General Howe himself?"

"Yes. I have some important news for him."

"Then, in that case, I had better go with you to make sure you do not lose your way."

"Thanks; you are very kind," said Steve. "The general will no doubt commend you for your readiness to do the king a service."

The man gazed at Steve, who appeared to be about sixty years of age, as if he was in some doubt about him. He had orders to watch all seen going into the house of Martin Kellogg. Surely, he thought, these two old men could not be bothering themselves about the war?

"Do you think you could find the place without my company?" he finally asked of Steve.

"Of course we can find it by making inquiries as we go along," replied Steve, "but we would prefer to have you go with us, if you have the time and inclination to do so."

"Well, you stay here till I come back, Jeffrey," said the British spy to his comrade.

"No," said Jeffrey. "We'll both go."

"And leave the post?" asked the other.

"Yes. The game is in hand."

The other man started as if suddenly stung, and glanced keenly at Steve and Tom.

Steve understood the significance of his words, and made up his mind quickly how to act.

He turned to Jeffrey and said:

"I perceive from your remarks that you are on duty here. Am I not right?"

Jeffrey was taken aback, and made no reply.

"Don't be afraid to speak out. We are both loyal king's men," said Steve. "We were going to report to General Howe that two of his soldiers were foully murdered last night, and their dead bodies thrown into a well by a family supposed heretofore to be as loyal as any in the city."

The two men seemed astounded.

Steve continued:

"If you are detectives, then there is no need for us to go to headquarters. You can come with us and see the place for yourselves."

"Where is it?"

"Down on — street, next door to the rebel Simms' residence."

"The man Simms who was arrested last week?"

"Yes. My friend and I saw the whole affair last night."

"Come and show us the well," said Jeffrey and his comrade.

"Yes, of course," and Steve led the way along the street to the next block, down which they turned and walked till they arrived at Bob Simms' residence.

"There," said Steve, pointing to the well in the yard of Simms' vindictive Tory neighbor. "In that well you will find the bodies of two of the king's soldiers in full uniform. We saw them murdered and thrown in there last night."

"Where were they killed?"

"In that house beyond the well."

"Who did it?"

"Three men."

"Do you know them?"

"No."

"Come with us to the well," said the disguised Briton.

Steve and Tom went with them to the well.

The elder of the two shaded his eyes with his hands, as did the others.

"Good Lord!" he exclaimed. "I see the red uniform of one!"

"So do I," said the other.

Steve and Tom made a sudden movement, and the two spies were sent headlong down into the well to join the dead redcoats.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE TRAGEDY OF THE WELL.

"Come away, Tom!" cried Steve, dashing away from the well with a speed that greatly belied his looks.

Tom hastened after him.

Strange to say, the only spectator of the affair was Becky Simms, who happened to be at the kitchen window when the four men approached the well.



Knowing what was in the well, she was naturally nervous about it, and hence took particular notice of their movements.

The moment she saw the two men hurled down into the well, she surmised that Slippery Steve and Tom Hardin were the men who were running away from the well.

A few minutes after the occurrence the mistress of the house came out to the well for a pail of water.

She sent the bucket down into the well, and found she could not pull it up again.

She looked down to see what held it, and was astounded at hearing a weak voice say:

"For God's sake get us out of this!"

Giving a wild scream of terror, the woman fled to the house.

Her husband was still at home.

He ran out to see what the matter was.

"There's a man in the well!" she cried.

He ran to the well, and, looking down, saw that she had told the truth.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"We are loyal king's men. Can you get us out?"

"Yes, with the help of another man," was the reply, and then Ben Floyd, for that was his name, turned and hailed a couple of men who were passing along the street at the time:

"Here, friends, help! Here's a couple of men fallen into the well!"

The two strangers ran to the well and soon ascertained that what Floyd said was true. They went to work, and, by the aid of a larger and stronger rope, drew the two men out of the depths.

One of them was pretty badly hurt. The other escaped with a few slight bruises.

"How did you come to fall in there?" Floyd asked.

"We were pushed in by somebody," was the reply, "as we were looking for two dead soldiers who had been thrown in there last night."

An exclamation of horror burst from the Floyd family and the two men who had drawn up.

"Two more in there!" cried one of the party, looking down into the well.

"Yes; two of the king's men were murdered in that house there last night and thrown into that well," said one of the spies.

"You know not what you are saying, sir," said Floyd; "nobody has been murdered in my house, nor have any soldiers been in there."

"Oh, you are the man, are you? Arrest him! He is a murderer and a traitor to his king!"

Ere he could realize it, Floyd was seized and made a prisoner. Other people came by and stopped to see what the matter was. Then it became known that two dead soldiers were in the well, and a great sensation was the result.

A company of soldiers soon came, and the premises were placed under guard. The dead bodies were drawn out, and it transpired that they were two soldiers set to watch the next house—that of Robert Simms—whose arrest had been brought about by Ben Floyd, his Tory neighbor.

The officer in command of the company called on Mrs. Simms and her daughter.

"Do you know anything about this affair, madam?" he asked.

"No, sir," was the prompt reply, for she and Becky had agreed to deny everything.

"Did you hear any noise of any kind during the night?"

"No, sir."

As there was no ground on which he could arrest the mother and daughter, the officer retired.

Then he learned that two old men had declared that they saw the murders take place in Floyd's house, and went and told the two spies about it.

"Where are those two men?"

Nobody knew, of course.

"The truth is," said one of the spies, "I suspect that they are the very ones who pushed us into the well."

"And also murdered the two soldiers," suggested Floyd.

"We will have to let the commander-in-chief settle this affair," said the captain leaving a guard at the house and marching off to headquarters with his prisoner.

In the meantime, the Floyd family was thrown into the deepest

distress by the awful charge of murder against them. Mrs. Floyd and her daughter Alice hated Mrs. Simms and her daughter Becky with a hatred that was Satanic in its intensity. They had concocted the scheme to get Robert Simms arrested, for they well knew he was a true patriot, and then indulge in mock sympathy with his unfortunate family.

Now they had a taste of it themselves, and could not understand just how it came about. That the Simms family had anything to do with it they did not suspect, as they knew nothing of Slippery Steve's visit to their house.

Slippery Steve and Tom Hardin, in the meantime, had gotten away to the upper end of the city, where they changed their disguises and concealed themselves till night.

"Now, Tom," said Steve, "you must get across the line and hasten back to Valley Forge. Tell the general everything I whispered to you this morning, and say that Robert Simms is in prison, and that I am going to see him and aid him to escape if I can."

Tom expressed himself as ready and eager to go, saying:

"I am glad of the chance to do something, Steve."

"I know that, Tom, but don't lose any time; don't take it into your head to go home to see your family until you have first been to Valley Forge."

"Don't be afraid of any neglect of duty on my part, Steve," said Tom.

"I know you are true, Tom; but I also know that you love your wife and children like all good men do. Be on your guard always, or you will lose your grip. I will go with you, to see you across the line. You may need a little help there."

They both then started off toward the lines to find a spot where the young patriot could slip across.

On the way they met several parties of redcoats, but managed to dodge them in the darkness, and in a half hour or so reached the limit of the camp.

A close inspection of the line of sentinels filled them with alarm.

The guard had been quadrupled.

The enemy, conscious that patriot spies were within their lines, had taken extraordinary steps to catch them.

Tom was dismayed for a few minutes and did not know what to do. On the contrary, Steve did know what to do, and he set about doing it at once.

"You must get across, Tom," he whispered, "even if we have to shoot down a couple of those sentinels."

"But won't they shoot us down?"

"We must take the chances on that. Men can't see to shoot well in the dark. We'll walk up to two of them; shoot them down. Then you run in one direction, and I will go in another. The others will fire, but the darkness will prevent them from getting any aim at us. What say you to that plan?"

"I don't see that we can adopt any other."

"No, there is no other way."

"Then I am ready."

"Come on, then. We'll get into that thicket and wait for them to come by so as to get their exact distance."

They crept close to the line and waited for the sentinels to pass and repass several times.

Then, as they came by the fifth time, both men sprang out upon them, clapped pistols to their heads and fired.

The next moment Tom dashed forward, and Steve turned back into the thicket, whilst the other sentinels fired their muskets and gave a wild alarm.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE SPY AT WORK.

As may very readily be supposed, the attack on the sentinels created the most intense excitement all along the line of guards.

Had the enemy appeared in force a greater fuss could not have been created. Whole regiments were under arms in a few minutes, and couriers ran hither and thither like men out of their senses.

The two dead sentinels were found where they had fallen, and were carried to their quarters and examined. A strong guard was placed near the spot where they fell—what for no one knew. In the excitement of the moment some queer orders are issued by men in authority, and no one dares question their wisdom.

When morning came an investigation convinced the British officers



that the two sentinels had been slain by two men from the *inside* of the line.

"They were two spies making their escape," said an old veteran officer, "and they were doubtless the very men we were after."

"They are bold enough to attack us in our tents, I believe. But, by the king's robe, we'll have the varlets yet! They shall swing as high as Haman!"

The rage of General Howe, on hearing that the two spies had escaped, was unbounded. He could blame no one, for the thing was too daring to be ordinarily guarded against. That two rebel spies should come into his lines, and then escape him, despite the most stringent measures to capture them, was enough to make him curse the whole service.

The reader might ask how the redcoats knew there were two spies in their camp. They suspected it from the story of the two old men about the dead soldiers in the well. Their sudden disappearance, after pushing two British spies in the well, was proof enough that they were not what they seemed, and steps were at once taken to apprehend them.

But Slippery Steve was too slippery for them.

He hastened back down into the city, leaving the excited soldiers to work up the theory that he was on the other side of the line.

He no longer passed as an old man, but as a young farmer, having gotten himself up to look like one. Many of the farmers in New Jersey and beyond the Schuylkill came into the city every day, having permits to bring in produce and such other things as they wished to sell. He knew that the presence of a young farmer in the city would not, therefore, excite any suspicion.

"Now, I will go back to Bill Hines," he said to himself, as he made his way down into the city, "and see if I can get a bed there till morning. A good sleep will do me more good than anything else just now."

Accordingly, he pushed on down-town, and soon came to Hines' place. But as there were a couple of redcoats on the other side of the street, he passed on, not daring to stop, lest he excite suspicion against Hines by so doing. The two soldiers seemed to have been in some tavern nearby, and were pretty well under the influence of ale or some other drink.

Seeing Steve on the farther side of the street from them they hailed him, and commanded him to halt. To run away would be to rouse suspicion, and a hue and cry would probably be raised.

"Well, I'm halted," he replied. "What do you want of me?"

"Wait an' see," said one of the redcoats, as they both reeled across the street to where he was standing.

"Who are you?" demanded the taller of the two, who happened to be a sergeant of dragoons.

"I am a citizen of Philadelphia and a loyal king's man," was the reply.

"How (hic) do I know that?" demanded the other, insolently.

"You *don't* know it," said Steve. "You are too drunk to know anything."

"Tare an 'ounds!" exclaimed the sergeant. "Do you dare insult the king's—"

"Look here," exclaimed Steve, interrupting him. "You are off duty and drunk. You have no right to disturb loyal and peaceable citizens, so go along with your drunk and let me alone."

The sergeant made a clutch at his throat.

He was just drunk enough to want to whip somebody, and he thought he had found someone on whom he could exercise himself for a few minutes.

But Steve did not purpose becoming the victim of his drunken desire. He quickly threw up his hand and warded off the sergeant's hand.

"Hands off!" he said. "Don't bother me. You are both drunk."

"Choke 'is 'ead haff, sergeant!" cried the other, in an unmistakable brogue.

Steve was not carrying a head to be choked off, so as they both rushed at him he gave one a stunning blow on the nose and the other one in his stomach. The sergeant felt of his nose to see if it was all there, and the other doubled up and rolled on the ground as if a terrible cramp-colic had suddenly seized him.

"Tare an 'ounds!" hissed the sergeant, as the claret from his nose trickled down through his fingers, "I'll 'ave you 'ung for striking a king's officer."

Steve ran at him and gave him another that sent him rolling in the dust.

"The king's officers have no right to insult loyal subjects," he said, "so I'll give you the punishment you deserve."

He then administered some heavy kicks that made them roar.

"The deuce!" exclaimed Steve, "that'll bring people I don't want to meet," and he turned and fled down the street as fast as his heels could carry him, leaving the two drunken cowards to tell what tale they pleased.

As he expected, the two rascals, half sobered by the unexpected rough usage they had received, said that a whole band of rebels had attacked and beaten them.

They were arrested by the patrol and marched to the guard-house as brawlers.

An hour later Steve returned to Hines' house, and rapped gently on the window of his bed-room.

"Who is it?" Bill Hines asked, in a low tone of voice.

"It's me, Bill—Steve."

"Hello! is it you, Steve? What's up?"

"I want a bed till morning, Bill."

"And you shall have it. Come round to the back door."

He went round to the rear of the house, and was admitted.

"Have you been in trouble since this morning, Steve?" Hines asked.

"None that bothers me," was the reply. "I will tell you all about it in the morning."

He was given a good bed, and for the first time in several nights he had a good sleep, which he very much needed.

So soundly did he sleep that the sun was an hour high when he awoke. He was usually an early riser.

At breakfast that morning he told Hines and his wife about his and Tom's adventures the day before, and how Tom got across the lines to go back to Valley Forge with news for Washington.

Hines was pleased at hearing that Ben Floyd was under arrest, even though he was innocent of the charge against him.

"He caused Simms to be arrested," he said, "and I am glad he is getting a little of it himself. He has done us no little harm by setting spies to watch the houses of many patriots, who otherwise would not have been troubled."

"Yes," said Steve, "and that's why I took the notion to chuck the dead rascals into the well. I guess they'll keep him there a month or so before he can make his innocence clear."

"I hope so," said Hines. "Nor would I care if they hung him on mere suspicion."

"Oh, I guess they won't do that."

"They have served many of our boys that way."

"No doubt of that. Now, Bill, how can I manage to see Simms in prison?"

"Bless me, Steve, I don't know."

"I must see him, Bill," said Steve. "I think I can aid him in escaping."

"Good Lord! You'll get your neck in the halter, Steve!"

"It's all the time in danger of that. I am getting used to it. They have to catch an eel before they can skin him."

"They are catching a good many lately."

"Yes; but they never hold me when they catch me. I am going to take a walk down by the prison," and taking his hat he started out of the house and wended his way toward the Delaware river.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### PLOTTING A RESCUE.

THE young patriot found no difficulty in making his way down to the old brick building which was then being used as a prison for such prisoners as fell into the hands of the British. It was a large and very strongly built structure, and, with but little alteration, answered admirably for all the purposes of a jail.

At the time of which we write there were several hundred prisoners confined between those solid brick walls, and a guard stood at the door, and under each window.

Slippery Steve wended his way down to and past the building, glancing at the guards, doors and windows, mentally calculating as he did so as to the chances of aiding his friend's escape from it.

"It's a bad job," he muttered to himself. "It's got to be done somehow, though. Becky thinks I can do it, and she shall not



think I can't. Ah! I have it now. Strategy is the thing. When brute force fails, strategy will do the work. Now, if I can get hold of the uniform of a British officer—say a captain—I can walk right in and take him out. The guard will think I have the right to do it, and will say nothing about it. If he should halt me, I ought to have an order from General Howe to turn him over to me. By my good blade! I'll do it, even if I have to murder some captain to get his uniform!"

Full of this new idea, Steve went up another street and returned to Hines' house. Hines had left the house to attend to some work, but Martha sat down and gave him all the news she knew. They talked for hours, and at last Steve asked:

"Martha, did Bill ever have occasion to use a pass from Howe's headquarters?"

"Yes; several times. He used one only two or three weeks ago. I think he has a few old ones in some of his pockets now."

"Please look and see if you can find one, Martha," he said, overjoyed at what he heard.

"Yes, I will look," and she arose and passed into the adjoining room, whence she returned in a few minutes, with two passes, given him by the post-commandant.

"Here are two," she said, handing them to him. "But to use them would get my husband into no end of trouble."

"Trust me for not getting you into trouble, my dear cousin," he replied, taking the two passes, and examining them very closely.

"What can you do with them, Steve?" she asked after a long silence.

"Make use of them from which to copy the signature."

"Do you mean to forge the name of the commander of the post?" she asked in no little amazement.

"Yes."

"Do you know the penalty?"

"Oh, yes. But what do I care for that? They will hang me anyhow if they catch me. Bring me some ink and paper, and let me practice at this signature. It does not look like a hard one to imitate."

She did as he desired, and in a little while he was seated at a little table writing the name of the British officer. He wrote it over a thousand times, each time trying to imitate the signature before him.

The greater part of the day passed, and still he was hard at work with the pen.

Bill Hines came in, and was somewhat surprised at finding him there.

"What are you writing, Steve?" he asked.

Steve showed him what he was trying to do, and the keen-witted patriot at once divined his purpose.

"You have got pretty near to it," he remarked, as he compared the bogus with the genuine signature.

"Yes, I think I can catch it after a while," replied Steve, resuming his task.

"Do you think you can work the other part of the job?"

"Oh, yes."

"What is it?"

"Simply to get Bob outside the prison."

"He can take care of himself then?"

"Yes."

"He will have to leave the city?"

"Yes."

"And you, too?"

"Yes; but I'd do that anyhow."

"What will his wife and daughter do?"

"The best they can."

"Can I do anything for you?"

"Yes."

"Name it?"

"Let Bob have a suit of your clothes when he comes out. He will need them."

"Of course."

"Thanks. I knew you would do it."

Steve then wrote on another hour, when he suddenly exclaimed:

"I have got it!"

Hines looked at the name and smiled.

"Yes," he said, "I think you have. He would not know the difference himself."

Steve then wrote a note.

"To the officer of the prison guard,—

"Let Captain Beauchampe bring the prisoner, Robert Simms, before a court-martial to be in session at these headquarters this evening."

"ST. GEORGE SYDENHAM,

"Col. Com'd'g Post."

"There, that will do, I think. Now I have left the date out till I get the uniform of a British captain."

"By my soul, Steve Stone!" exclaimed Hines, "I do believe that fortune is working in your favor this day."

"What's the matter now?"

"I know that a British officer is paying his devotions to a young lady on the other side of the street. He is about your size, and has just had a new, beautiful uniform made."

"How often does he visit her?"

"Three times a week. He will go there to-night."

"Thanks. Fortune is indeed kind to me to-day," said Steve, folding up the forged order and stowing it away in his pocket.

He then questioned Hines in regard to the young officer and his visits to the young lady.

"I'll get his uniform to-night," he said, "or my name will not be Steve Stone to-morrow."

"Now, Steve, you must not kill him," said Martha Hines. "I won't have a murder concocted in my house."

"I'll promise you there shall be no murder in this case, Martha, unless I am attacked, and have to do so in self-defense."

"That would be excusable, then. But how will you manage it without killing him, Steve? He won't exchange clothes with you voluntarily."

"I'll seize him, gag him, and then make the trade," said Steve, with a smile.

"He'll make an alarm and bring others to his assistance," suggested Martha.

"I'll take care to stop his mouth the first thing, you know. Now, if he was a woman, that would be the hardest part of the job, you know."

"Yes," she retorted, "for she would scratch your eyes out, or break your head—"

"With her tongue," added Hines. "You're right, Steve. 'Tis her worst weapon."

"Oh, yes; abuse us poor women!" said Martha. "When a man can't do anything else he can do that."

"Come now, Martha, you know we couldn't get along without you women," said Steve, laughing. "I am engaged to one myself, and to me she is the most precious treasure in the world."

"You engaged, Steve Stone?" Martha exclaimed, all her feminine curiosity aroused. "Who in the world is the poor, miserable creature?"

"Come now," said Steve, laughing. "When you ask me who the happy, fortunate girl is I will tell you."

"Now, Steve Stone, you know I was jesting. Who is the happy, fortunate girl? Do tell me, please."

"Can you keep the secret?"

"Of course I can—what a question!"

"I am suspicious about any woman's ability to keep a secret."

"Oh, I'll poison you if you don't tell me who she is!"

Steve and Hines roared with laughter. Then the young spy said:

"Well, cousin, mine, it is pretty Becky Simms."

"What a goose I am! I might have guessed that much myself. How long have you been engaged to her?"

"Several months. Do you think it a good match?"

"Yes—Becky is a good girl, and as smart as a lawyer. I am glad for your sake. You will need a sharp woman to take you in hand. When do you marry?"

"As soon as the war ends."

Thus they sat and talked till the day ended and night covered the earth again with her mantle of darkness.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE DEATH OF THE YOUNG OFFICER—THE RESCUE.

Soon after supper Steve and Hines sat out in front of the cottage,



and kept a sharp lookout for the British captain. They expected him to come along every moment, as it was his regular evening for him to visit the old Tory's daughter, several doors above the cottage.

Suddenly footsteps were heard coming along the sidewalk, and a moment or two later the form of the captain was seen passing the little gate.

"That's him," whispered Hines, as the brilliant uniform passed.

Steve took a good look at him, and then asked, after he had passed out of sight:

"How long will he remain with his girl?"

"Till near midnight."

"That's good news! I'd rather take him late, for there won't be so much danger of being interfered with by any third party."

They sat up and talked till a late hour, when Steve told Hines and Martha to go to bed and not think of anything he was doing. They bade him good-night and went in to retire. Steve turned and sauntered along the street to get a look at the house in which his intended victim was visiting. He saw a light in the front room, and knew that the old Tory's daughter was listening to the wooing of the young officer.

"It's a shame that a British officer," he said, "should woo and win an American girl. I hope for her sake that she does not love him very much, for I cannot believe he is in earnest, unless her father is very rich."

Two hours passed, and the time drew near for the young captain to take leave of his lady-love. Steve waited until he saw him come out, and then he stepped back into the deep shadow of the night, to screen himself until he could reach the proper place to strike.

The captain turned his face toward the river, and walked as if in a deep study about something that very much pressed on his mind.

Steve followed with the stealthy tread of a panther, and was rejoiced to see that he was approaching the very spot that he would have chosen had he been able to do so, for his work. It was almost within a stone's throw of the river, when Steve sprang forward to deal him a stunning blow with the butt of his pistol, intending to stun him to unconsciousness, and effect the change of clothing ere he could recover.

But it so happened that the young officer heard him coming, and wheeled to face him ere he was near enough to strike. Steve was astonished.

The young officer defended himself like a brave fellow. He drew a pistol and snapped it at Steve's breast.

Then it became a question of life and death for both. Steve drew his own weapon and fired.

The bullet crashed through the Briton's head, and he fell dead at his slayer's feet.

"Ah, I didn't intend this," muttered Steve, "but it was your life or mine."

Then, fearing the shot would bring some inquisitive person to the spot, he took up the still warm body of the young officer and ran about fifty yards to the left. There he laid it on the ground, and began hastily to strip it of the handsome uniform. The work was done in a few minutes, and then he slipped the scarlet suit on over his own clothing.

"Now, to prevent more trouble, I'll throw the body into the river. They will not know what has become of him for several days—maybe weeks—by which time I shall not care anything about it."

Taking the body up in his arms he hastened to the river with it. Throwing it from him, it fell with a splash that seemed as if it could have been heard a quarter of a mile away.

As if afraid that the splash would call someone to the spot, he turned and ran back up the street as fast as his heels could carry him.

On the way he met two soldiers, who asked him the way to a certain street.

They were very drunk, and thinking it would explain the mystery if they were found about the spot, he directed them to the river and passed on.

The two drunken soldiers staggered along down the street, unable to see in which direction they were going in the dark, and very naturally walked off into the water.

The cold splash instantly sobered them.

They yelled lustily for help.

"Help, help!"

"Where are you?" called a voice from below.

"Help, help! Ugh! Lord save me!"

Several persons came running down to the spot. Lights were brought, and an effort made to find the drowning men.

But they were seen no more.

The floating ice and intense coldness of the water rendered the men helpless, and in a few minutes they sank to rise no more.

In another half hour the people went away shuddering, as they spoke of the awful death of the unknown.

In the meantime, Steve hastened back to the cottage of Bill Hines. He was admitted by Hines, and hastened to the room he had occupied the night before.

The next morning he found a purse of gold and a fine gold watch in the inner breast pocket of the coat.

"The gold I will keep, and the watch return to some one of his brother officers as soon as I can do so safely. I am not a robber except when it will benefit my country. If General Washington says it is right to keep the watch I will do so."

The uniform fitted him finely.

He looked every inch a military man, and Martha said it was a pity he was not a Continental officer.

"I will be one after awhile," he said. "Just wait till the time comes for the rewards."

"I hope you will get a good share for risking your neck so much," said Martha. "You would be hung if they were to catch you here."

Steve spent the day at the cottage, and late in the afternoon started out on his perilous undertaking.

On reaching the door of the prison he asked for the officer in charge, to whom he bowed and gave the note.

The officer read it, and then turned to one of his men, and said:

"Go inside and bring one Robert Simms out."

The man went inside and called for Robert Simms.

Simms responded.

"You are wanted—come with me."

Simms followed him out.

"Here's your man, captain."

Steve turned and looked at him.

"Is this Robert Simms?" he asked.

"Yes, sir; that's my name," said Bob, turning all sorts of colors, for he recognized Steve at once.

"Come with me, then. You are wanted at headquarters," and taking Bob by the arm led him away from the prison.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE RESCUE FROM PRISON.

As the two patriots walked away up the street, they met many soldiers in the scarlet uniform of England. But of all they met not one presented a more handsome appearance than did Slippery Steve in the captain's new uniform.

"How did it happen, Steve?" Bob Simms asked, when they were several blocks away from the prison from which he had just been rescued.

"Never mind that now," said Steve. "I've done it, and will tell you about it some other time. We must go down to Bill Hines' house, where you can have a change of clothes. Then you must make your way over the line to-night and go to Valley Forge, or elsewhere, just as you please."

"Without seeing my wife and daughter?"

"Yes; it's too dangerous. Your house is constantly watched. I will go there and let them know that you are free."

"Ah! do that, and you will add still more to the debt of gratitude I owe you. Steve Stone," said Bob, tears starting to his eyes, "I know they will rejoice that I am out of the clutches of these red-coated fiends, even though I have to leave them without a protector, and even the means of subsistence."

"They shall not suffer," said Steve, in a low tone of voice, "for I can place gold enough in their hands to keep them several months."

"You can! You have gold, Steve Stone?"

"For God's sake hush!" cautioned Steve. "You will bring instant destruction on our heads by your loud talk. Yes; I have gold enough in my pocket to keep Mrs. Simms and Becky for several months, and they shall have every shilling of it. You want to know where I got it? Ah! I knew that. Well, when I heard that you were arrested and locked up, I at once made up my mind to rescue you. To do so I had to procure this uniform. I found that a certain young captain



visited a certain young lady in — street twice a week. To-night was my best chance to rescue you. So last night I laid in wait for him, knocked him senseless, took his uniform and put it on my own person. In the pockets I found the gold I spoke of. It's fair capture according to the rules of English warfare, is it not?"

"Yes; it's English all over," and Simms chuckled over the game his young patriot friend had played so successfully. In a little while they reached the residence of Bill Hines, and found that worthy friend of liberty anxiously waiting for them.

"So you succeeded Steve!" exclaimed Hines, grasping the cunning spy's hand,

"Yes; and now I want you to exchange a suit of clothes with him so he will not be recognized if his escape becomes known before we can get across the line."

"Yes; I can do that very easily. Come into the room and——"

"Stay here till I go round to your house, Bob," said Steve, interrupting them.

The next moment he was off, and Simms and Hines sat down together to talk in whispers over the cruel acts of the enemy all over the land.

Let us now follow Slippery Steve as he made his way in the direction of the home of Bob Simms, whom he had just rescued from the clutches of the enemy. He still wore the brilliant uniform of the young captain whom he had cast into the chilling waters of the Delaware. The sword was dangling at his side, and his whole make-up was that of a haughty man of rank. He looked every inch a soldier, and did not hesitate to pass through any party of British officers that came in his way. He was fully conscious of the perfection of his disguise, and would not have hesitated to go into the presence of Lord Howe himself, had occasion demanded his doing so.

When he arrived at Simms' house he found that two more detectives were on the watch. He walked up to one of them and asked:

"Have you seen anything suspicious to-night?"

"No, sir," replied the man, giving the salute.

"Be vigilant. There are spies in the city, and some of them will be sure to come here."

He then turned and went up to the door.

The knocker was heard at least two blocks away.

Mrs. Simms came to the door, and was dismayed on seeing a British officer there.

"Good-evening, ma'am!" said Steve, in his blandest tones. "I wish to see you and your daughter on very important——"

"The good Lord save us!" ejaculated the good lady in an undertone. "Come in, you terrible man, and——"

Steve entered, and the next moment Becky's arms were around his neck, and her lips joined to his in a joyous, passionate kiss.

"You dear, good fellow!" she said. "I know what all this means. Mother and I knew your voice. My father is free."

"Yes, he is now at the house of a friend, and before sunrise will be beyond the lines of the British army."

"Oh, Steve—my—heart—is——"

The happy wife and mother burst into tears of joy, and sobbed audibly for several minutes. Becky was too happy to do otherwise than hug and kiss the brave spy again and again.

"Ah, Becky, girl," he said, "you'll make me wish him in prison again for the pleasure of this moment."

"Never mind that, dear Steve," said Becky, about whom there was no foolish nonsense. "I can always have a hug and kiss for you after this."

"Then you'll be tempting me to come here every day when I ought to be on duty elsewhere. But I have little time to stay. Here's some gold to keep you till your father can send more. Never mind where it came from. Steve Stone knows his business. Take it and make it go as far as you can," and with that he placed the gold coins in Becky's hand.

"Oh, what a friend you are, Steve Stone," said Mrs. Simms, as Becky handed her the money. "I don't know how we would have lived, for we have no money in the house."

"I knew that. Bob may not be able to come back till the enemy is driven out of the city. That won't be many weeks."

"Oh, will they ever be driven away, Steve?" Becky asked, as if her whole future happiness was wrapped up in the question.

"Yes, and that very soon," was the reply.

"Then we will see father again soon?"

"Yes."

"And you, too."

"Yes, I'll call again," and the brave spy smiled knowingly as he made the remark.

"How handsome you look, Steve," said Becky, "in that uniform."

"Yes, I would make a lady-killer in it, wouldn't I?"

"To be sure you would. You have already killed me," and the happy girl leaned lovingly in his arms.

"Do you know, Steve," said Mrs. Simms, "that Mrs. Floyd and her daughter Alice insist that we—Becky and I—are the cause of her husband's arrest, and threaten us with all manner of vengeance?"

"Does she? Well, what vengeance can she wreak on you?"

"Indeed I know not. But she is not one to stop at a falsehood if it will serve her purpose."

"In that case you can threaten her with a little vengeance, too, for if she dares to injure you in any way, just let me know it, and I will give her a scare that will last her a lifetime."

"You wouldn't harm her?"

"No, I would only give her a good scare."

"Well, I'll wait and see what she will do and then let you know."

"Well, what shall I say to Bob when I see him? I am going back to him now."

"Tell him how glad we are that he is free. He knows how much we love him. We will watch and pray for him, and for you too."

Steve then took leave of the mother and daughter and opened the door to go out.

To his amazement, he met a British officer there with a drawn sword in his hand.

Becky saw the officer at the same time, and gave a half-suppressed feminine shriek, for she well knew that Steve would not be taken alive.

"Ah! You are in fine feather to-night, Mr. Stone," said the officer, "in such delectable company as Mrs. and Miss Simms."

"There's no better company in the city, sir," said Steve, drawing the sword that hung at his side, "and I'll maintain it at the point of this sword."

He made such a sudden lunge at the officer that the latter had to retreat a few paces to escape being run through. The next moment he resumed the offensive, but at an unlucky moment Steve's sword entered his breast to the hilt. He gave a groan, threw up his hands, and fell to the ground—dead.

## CHAPTER XX.

### ANOTHER TRAGEDY—ESCAPING FROM THE CAMP.

The young officer fell within a few feet of the door.

"I am sorry for this," said Steve, turning to Mrs. Simms, "as it may make more trouble for you."

Just then the two disguised detectives, whom he had seen before he entered the house, sprang at him, each with a pistol in his hands.

"Surrender!" they cried.

"To whom?" he demanded.

"To these weapons," was the reply.

Quick as a flash he dropped to his knees, plunged the sword through the one nearest to him, just as two pistol balls flew past his head. Then he sprang up and sent a bullet crashing through the other one's head.

"That's the last one—now I'm off!"

He sprang away in the darkness, and in a moment he was out of sight.

The two women were terribly frightened.

But in a few minutes several men, attracted by the shots, came running to the spot.

"Here's a murder!" cried one.

"Three murders!" cried another.

"One of them is a king's officer!" said a third.

"What in the world does it mean?" asked a fourth.

"It's rank treason right in the heart of the king's army," one remarked.

The crowd kept increasing, and in a very little while a squad of red-coats came up under charge of a young officer.

The result was that the premises were placed under guard, and Mrs. Simms and Becky arrested. They were allowed to remain in the house, however; but they were soon subjected to the severest questioning.



They would not say who did the killing, and a general mystery covered the tragedy.

In the meantime, Steve had crept into a dark alley and shed the scarlet uniform he had on. This he left lying on the ground, and hastened away to rejoin Bob and assist him in getting out of the city.

He found Bob waiting patiently for him at Hines'. To him he related all that had taken place at his house.

"There are three dead men there," he said. "But dead men tell no tales. You will get all the credit for their taking off."

"How so?"

"Why, your escape will be known to-morrow morning, and everyone will naturally think that you visited your family before leaving the city."

"That's the Lord's truth," said Simms, turning as pale as death, "and they will make all the more trouble for my wife and her daughter. It's a sorry day for them."

"But it will be no worse than when you were in prison," said Steve.

"No, I suppose not. Besides, I can be in a position to avenge any wrong or insult that might be done them."

"Yes. The only trouble they will have will be in the constant watch that will be set on them, in the hope of some day catching you."

"Well, I'll see that they don't catch me."

"Are you ready to go now?" Steve asked, after a pause of some minutes.

"Yes."

"Come on, then. Good-by, Martha and Bill. Some day we will show you how much we appreciate your kindness to us."

They both shook hands with the patriotic couple and then glided out of the house.

It was past the hour of midnight when they reached the lines of the picket-guards. The enemy had not relaxed any of his vigilance of the past few days. A double line of sentinels were on duty, and our hero had to wait some time ere he could find a favorable opportunity to get over the line. They did not succeed in getting across without an encounter with the guard, who discovered them just as they thought they were safe.

"Halt!" he cried. "Who goes there?"

"Friends," replied Steve.

"Advance, friends, and give the countersign," said the guard, bringing his musket to bear upon them.

"Certainly," said Steve. "I have the countersign all right," and he advanced right up to the point of the bayonet, as if to whisper the countersign to the sentinel.

At that moment he seized the bayonet, pushed it aside, sprang forward and plunged his knife to the hilt into the breast of the sentinel, who sank down at his feet with a groan.

"Quick, Bob! this way!" and both of them dashed away in the darkness ere the other sentinel could realize that any mischief had been done.

He sent a bullet after them, and then raised the alarm. The greatest excitement prevailed all along the line, and a company of dragoons was sent out to try to overtake them.

Slippery Steve was not the man to be caught on a dark night. He led the way up the Schuylkill till he reached the humble home of old Pete, who quickly put them on the other side.

"We are all right now," said Steve, the moment he set foot on the bank of the river. "They have no force on this side. We can take our time now."

"I have a great load taken off my mind, Steve," replied Simms. "I cannot help thinking that the redcoats were exceedingly anxious to get up an excuse to hang me."

"Of course they were, and they would have succeeded, too, in a few days more. Why are your neighbors, the Floyds, so bitter against you? They are worse than any partisans I ever heard of."

"It grew out of a dispute about the title to a lot in the rear of our premises. They hope that the British courts in the city will decide in their favor because of my sympathy with Washington."

"Do you know where Ben Floyd is now?" Steve asked.

"No—unless he is at home with his family. Why do you ask?"

"Well, he is in prison under suspicion of having caused the death of two British soldiers."

"Good Heavens! what do you mean?" exclaimed Bob Simms, in unfeigned amazement.

"The other night," continued Steve, "when I went to your back window, as usual, with Tom Hardin to call you up, not knowing you were in prison, two British soldiers came up and undertook to arrest us. We didn't go there to be arrested and hung, so we out with our knives and made short work of them. Then, to save your family from trouble we tossed the two dead bodies into Floyd's well and made off. Becky had told me how bitter the Floyds were to the family, and maybe that had something to do with it. At any rate, being Tories, I didn't care what harm it did them. The next day I told two detectives who were watching your house that I had seen the two redcoats murdered in Floyd's house, and afterwards thrown into the well. They made Tom and I go with them, and when they were peering down into the well we pushed them in and got away. They were pulled out after a while by persons who heard their cries, and the result was Ben Floyd's arrest. They can't understand yet how the thing came to be fastened on them. Of course Ben will get out after a while, but he will get a good dose of prison life before he does."

"Steve, I am not a vindictive man, as you well know," said Bob Simms, "but I cannot avoid a feeling of great satisfaction at what you have told me, for Ben Floyd was the cause of my arrest and imprisonment. He is the cause of all my troubles."

"Yes, I know that, and it did me good to give him a taste of the same sauce. But Becky says that Mrs. Floyd accuses her and her mother of being at the bottom of Ben's arrest, and threatens all sorts of terrible things by way of revenge. I told her not to be afraid—that I would give them a scare that would make a decent Christian family of them, if they undertook to annoy her."

"Mrs. Floyd is a woman of most vicious temper, Steve," said Bob, shaking his head and looking quite serious.

"Don't be uneasy, Bob," replied Steve, laughing good-naturedly; "Mrs. Floyd will not undertake anything until her husband gets out of prison, which won't be very soon, I take it. Come this way. I want to call on an old friend of mine down this way before we go to Valley Forge."

Steve led the way down the right bank of the Schuylkill till he came in sight of the cabin of John Goodman, the patriotic old Quaker. The gray streaks of dawn were brightening the east. Steve knew that the sun never got up ahead of John Goodman, so he knocked on the door, and found him up, making a fire for his wife to cook by.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### IN CLOSE QUARTERS.

JOHN GOODMAN was not surprised at the sudden appearance of the spy. He knew that Steve was in the city, and that he was likely to appear at any moment.

"Verily, Friend Stephen," he said, "thou comest and goest like a thief in the night."

"Yes, Friend Goodman, you may well say that. Those redcoat rascals would not allow me to go and come in any other way. Good-morning, Mrs. Goodman. I hope you are well this morning."

"Yea, I am in good health, Friend Stephen, and right glad to give thee and thy friend a welcome."

"Many thanks for your kindness, Mrs. Goodman. This is my friend, Robert Simms, the patriot friend to whom General Washington first sent me in Philadelphia. The redcoats locked him up in prison, but I brought him away with me."

"Ha, ha, ha, Friend Stephen!" laughed Goodman; "thou art a cunning lad! They do right to call thee Slippery, for thou art the slipperiest man the redcoats ever tried to catch."

"One must be slippery in these times, Friend Goodman, if he would keep the hangman's halter from around his neck. Those redcoats are very fond of hanging men who love their country."

"Indeed they are!" said Bob; "they were very anxious to hang me, and in a few more days would have found a sufficient excuse to do so—such as they needed."

They tarried at Goodman's till the good wife had prepared a bountiful breakfast for them. Then they took leave of the old couple and set out for Valley Forge.

When about half way they met a countryman whom Steve knew.

"Steve Stone!" exclaimed the countryman the moment he saw him. "There is a company of dragoons looking for you back here a mile or



two. They swear they will have you, if they have to scour these woods for a month."

"What!" exclaimed Steve, in the greatest astonishment; "dragons between here and Valley Forge?"

"Yes—about a hundred of them. They are scattered along every path and in the woods to intercept you."

Steve gave a low whistle and looked at Bob Simms.

"We must be careful, Steve," said Bob. "They would make short work of both of us if they could catch us."

"So they would, but they shall not have that pleasure. We must get across the river somehow and reach Valley Forge that way. If I could get some of our boys and pounce down on those dragons I think we would have some fun."

"But how can we get across?" Bob asked. "It would chill one to death to plunge into that half-frozen water."

"You can get over by going up to Jack Tarbox's place," said the countryman. "There's a boat there, and Jack is true blue, too."

"That's our ferry, then," said Steve. "I know where Jack's place is. Come on, Bob!" and Steve led off toward the river, followed by his companion.

They kept well in the woods, not knowing how soon they might come in contact with some of the dragons. They had no rifles—only a brace of pistols each and a knife.

They had gone only a little way in the woods ere they heard a bugle in the road ahead of them.

"That's a detachment of them," whispered Steve. "They are certainly making a bold effort to head us off. Good Lord! they are coming right through the woods in this direction! Here, run this way! We must swim across if we can't avoid them in any other way."

They both ran quickly toward the river, and Steve would have plunged boldly in had he not caught sight of a large hollow log lying across his path. The thought that he might find a safe concealment inside of it caused him to make the experiment, much to the surprise of Bob, who had made up his mind to take to the water.

To the surprise and delight of Steve, the log was amply large enough to afford them all the shelter they wanted. The hollow extended some thirty or forty feet, which enabled them to get beyond the range of vision should the redcoats make an investigation.

"Now keep quiet and let's see what they will do," Steve whispered to Bob, and they both laid still as mice and listened.

The redcoats came to the log and stopped. They seemed to be engaged in some other pursuit at that moment, and Steve soon found it out. They were in search of a good place to build a fire to cook their rations by, and probably encamp for the night.

"This is a good place," said one, who must have been an officer. "We can build a fire against the log, and get our water from the river there."

"Good Lord!" thought Steve; "if they build a fire they'll roast us out and capture us."

To his intense disgust, they set to work building a fire against the log about where Steve was lying. He could hear them piling up dead fagots against the log, and then heard one with his flint and steel and tinder-box trying to get the blaze started.

He was a long time striking the spark, and the young officer called out to him:

"What's the matter there? Why don't you strike fire?"

"Everything is damp, sir," replied the soldier, "and my fingers are so cold I can't be as quick as usual, sir."

"I hope your fingers will turn to icicles, you red-coated fiend!" muttered Steve inside the log.

"What in blazes possessed you to come to this particular log to make a fire, anyhow? I hope you'll never be able to——"

"Here it is, sir!" said the soldier. "Here's a blaze, sir! We'll soon have a good fire!"

"Pile up the fagots and let it have a good start," said the officer. "It will take that log a long time to burn."

"Glad to hear that," muttered Steve loud enough for Bob to hear him. "Maybe you'll cook your rations and then go away before it burns through. If you will I won't hang you when I catch you some other time."

The fagots were piled up against the log, and pretty soon our heroes could hear the crackling of the flames as they leaped and hissed around their narrow quarters. Luckily for them, the log was pretty

thick where the fire was built. It would take a good while for the fire to burn through to the hollow.

The redcoats cooked their rations by the fire and ate them, and then, to the horror of Steve and Bob, the young officer declared that they would remain there till the next morning, in order to prevent the two men from slipping by along the river.

Hour after hour passed, and Steve began to feel the heat from the fire against the log without. He stood it as long as he could, and then backed down toward the lower end of the log against Bob.

"Just a little further down," he whispered to Bob.

Bob moved down a few feet in order to let him get below the fire, and then they waited and listened.

The fire finally burned through the hollow several feet above where Steve was lying. But beyond the inconvenience of a little smoke, it did not bother him.

The fire burned very slowly, and seemed more likely to consume the upper rather than the lower half of the fallen tree.

But as the hole made by the flames became larger, Steve could hear more distinctly what was said outside. He ascertained that the day had passed, and that guards were placed for the night. Then the others rolled in their blankets and were soon asleep. He could hear loud and continuous snoring, which convinced him that the sleepers were slumbering in dead earnest.

Pushing down against Bob, he whispered to him:

"We must make our escape now while they are asleep."

"But the guards?" returned Bob.

"We must kill them!" was the reply.

Slowly and cautiously they moved down toward the root of the tree, where the hollow was wide enough to permit Steve to crawl over Bob. He then put his head out and peered cautiously around at the redcoat sentinel and his sleeping comrades.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### STEVE AND BOB CAPTURED—A TERRIBLE PERIL.

THE situation was one of terrible moment to our two heroes. The slightest noise would attract the attention of the sleepless sentinel, who, on discovering them, would turn and fire upon them, and then alarm his comrades.

Steve saw all the peril of the situation at a glance, as he peered out from his hiding-place.

To crawl out from the log without making a noise that would attract the sentinel's attention, seemed to be an utter impossibility. It was unreasonable to expect such a thing, and so he hesitated and gave all the energies of his naturally acute mind to devising some other plan of escape.

Several times during his thinking spell did Steve notice that the guard moved around the little camp, as if to shake off a feeling of drowsiness. Each time would he pass around the butt, or lower end of the log, and move about. Sometimes he would halt and stand near the log as if in a deep reverie.

As he made this discovery Steve also found out that the guard was a good target for a little pistol practice.

"I can send a pistol ball through his head as he stands there," he muttered to himself, "and then get away out of the light of the fire before the others can wake up and get their arms. It's risky, I know, but I am willing to try it anyhow."

When the guard walked to the upper end of the log, Steve whispered his plans to Bob, and bade him prepare for the run.

Bob agreed, and Steve drew his pistol, to be in readiness when the sentinel returned to that end of the log. When he did return he stopped some ten feet away, and stood perfectly still, with his side turned to the hidden spy.

Steve took a deliberate aim at his left ear.

To miss would be certain death to him.

To kill the guard promised a hope of safety.

He pulled the trigger.

The shot coming from such narrow quarters made a deafening report, which echoed and re-echoed up and down the river, and through the forest.

But the bullet sped true to its mark.

The doomed sentinel dropped his musket, threw up both hands, staggered sideways a few paces, and then fell heavily to the ground.

Steve and Bob were up and away even before the sentinel had fallen. The slumbering redcoats sprang from their blankets like the trained



soldiers they were, seized their arms, and awaited the orders of their officers.

The officers glared around, as if in search of the enemy. They saw nothing, however, except the quivering form of the late guard lying where he had fallen.

Steve and Bob had made their escape without even having been seen by one of the redcoats, and lost no time in getting beyond the range of the muskets, if any should be fired in their direction.

"That was well done, Steve," said Bob, when they were a mile away from the dangerous locality. "I didn't think we would get off so easily."

"Neither did I," said Steve. "But I have found out that audacity is very often the only means of safety. To do the very thing your enemy thinks you dare not do is really the safest. But it seemed like murder to shoot a man down in cold blood in that way, though I knew he would serve us the same way if he could get the chance. War is war, however, and it's our duty to kill red-coated soldiers wherever we find them."

"Yes, that's true, but it's a terrible thing to take human life with cold-blooded deliberation," said Bob. "Much as I have suffered at the hands of the British, I shudder at the thought of killing a human being."

Steve laughed.

"You will get over that after a while," he said. "As for my part, I regard Englishmen and rattlesnakes in the same light—both to be killed on sight."

"That's the rule of war, and when I join the army I suppose I shall feel and act as you do."

"Of course you will. Do you know I am very hungry, Bob?"

"I know that I am," was the reply, "but I can stand it till morning, by which time we must reach the camp, will we not?"

"Yes, but the chances of getting something to eat there are very slim indeed."

"What will we do? We can't do much foraging in the dark?"

"No, but we can go to Jack's and get something to eat—no, I won't do that either. We can hold out till we reach the camp. Come on."

They pushed on through the woods for two or three miles, and then concluded to turn to the road again.

"They haven't divided their force this far apart," said Steve. "So we will be safe enough to do that. In the road we can soon make the distance."

Striking the road, they pushed forward with all speed, and had gone about two miles when they were startled by a voice in the bushes by the roadside ordering them very sternly to halt.

"Hello!" exclaimed Steve, coming to a sudden halt. "Who are you?"

"Never mind who we are," was the reply; "we want to know who you are."

"Oh, we are two farmers living on the river above here, and——"

"Yes—your farm is at Valley Forge at the present time," was the quiet reply. "Just stand where you are, or you'll be a dead man in just a wink of your eye."

"Keep cool, Bob," whispered Steve, and then raising his voice, said: "We are peaceable men, as you can see."

"We can't see much, except how to shoot," returned the unknown speaker. "We will take you to the light and see what you are."

Four men emerged from the bushes and approached our heroes. They presented rifles at their breasts, and one of them remarked:

"Any move to escape will be your death."

Then two of them came up and disarmed Steve first and Bob afterwards.

To make any attempt at resistance would have invited certain death. Steve submitted as coolly as if it were an every day occurrence with him.

"You were pretty well armed for a couple of peaceable farmers," remarked the leader of the party, on seeing the knives and braces of pistols found on their persons.

"You know that it is necessary for men to carry weapons of defense in times like these," said Steve very quietly.

"Certainly; but it's not necessary for non-combatants to make walking arsenals of themselves. Come along with us now, and walk straight, or it'll be the worse for you."

"Don't be uneasy," said Steve; "we won't hurt any of you."

"Blast you, who said we were uneasy? If you don't keep a civil tongue in your head, I'll cut it out for you."

"Then I'll be sure to keep it civil," and he chuckled good-naturedly as he tramped along the road.

"What in the name of burning sulphur are you laughing at?"

"Oh, I'm amused."

"Amused at what?"

"Your mistake."

"What mistake?"

Steve chuckled again.

"You were looking for Slippery Steve, were you not?"

"Yes."

"So were we," and he chuckled in great glee. "He is below us somewhere, and will be along before daylight."

Then, as if thinking the joke had been carried far enough, added:

"Joking aside now, leave two of your men here to guard against the chances of his slipping through, and the other two go with us down there to Captain Campbell, who will identify us at once and give you a little bit of caustic advice."

The man was staggered.

Campbell was the name of the captain of dragoons just below, and the thought that he had made an egregious blunder flashed through his mind.

"Do you belong to Campbell's command?" he asked.

"No; we are detectives, detailed to help him capture Steve Stone. We came out with him, however, and are under his command for the time being."

"Well, I am sorry; but I thought it my duty to stop everyone seen going in that direction. You may go on. Give them their weapons, Andrew."

Their weapons were restored to them, and together they walked at least a mile up the road toward Valley Forge.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### SLIPPERY STEVE'S SLIPPERY TONGUE.

ON the way up the road Steve talked very freely with the four Tories, even cracking a few jokes with them. They thought him a very jovial sort of a fellow, and told him to meet them at a certain tavern in Shippen street when they returned to the city, and have a bout with them over steaming mugs of flip.

"With all my heart," he said, "but the best flip is not to be had in Shippen street. I will conduct you to a place kept by a buxom widow and her charming daughter. The daughter makes the best flip in America, and can dance any soldier's legs off in the king's service."

"By my soul!" exclaimed the leader of the party; "I must see the girl and try her flip. When shall we meet there in Shippen street?"

"On the first evening that we return to the city," replied Steve, "which will be to-morrow night. As I take it Captain Campbell will not remain here for the rebel cavalry to come and gobble him up."

"To-morrow night be it then," said the man, shaking hands with them. Steve and Bob then passed on up the road toward Valley Forge.

"Steve! Steve!" exclaimed Bob Simms, the moment they were out of hearing of the enemy. "You ought to be commander-in-chief of the Continental army! You would soon talk every redcoat out of the country."

Steve chuckled.

"There's a time to sing and a time to dance," he said. "A time to fight and a time to talk. Sometimes the tongue can do more than all the powder and lead in the world. The time to talk was on hand to-night."

"It was the neatest thing I ever heard of," said Bob. "What a pity they can't find out that it was Slippery Steve who slipped through their fingers."

"Oh, they'll find that out. I'll take the trouble to let them know it."

They pushed on toward the Continental camp, reaching the picket line a little before daylight. At the urgent request of Steve, the officer of the guard sent him forward to headquarters with great haste.

The commander-in-chief was not awake, but Mad Anthony Wayne was, and to him Steve told the story of his adventures with Campbell's dragoons on that side of the Schuylkill.



General Wayne's eyes snapped.

"Mr. Stone," he said, "you will go with a detachment of our men and show them where that sneaking band of redcoats are."

"With the greatest pleasure, general," and in less than a half hour after his arrival in camp he was riding back down the road at the head of one hundred brave, ragged Continentals.

When they were within a mile of where the redcoats were encamped by the log in which Steve and Bob had concealed themselves, the patriots halted and dismounted. After leaving a sufficient number to take charge of the horses, the rest crept through the woods in the direction of the little camp.

The redcoats were engaged in cooking their breakfast when they were startled by a stern summons to surrender.

They sprang to arms like the trained soldiers they were, and awaited orders.

The young officer in command, however, glared around him only to find himself completely hemmed in on all sides.

"Surrender!" cried the patriot officer again.

"I surrender. Throw down your arms, men," returned the Briton.

They were only a dozen strong—a small detachment that had been placed thus near the river to intercept the spy if he should attempt to escape by that route.

Steve turned to the young British officer, after he had given up his sword, and asked:

"Did you lose one of your men last night?"

"Yes, and in a very mysterious manner," was the reply. "Do you know anything about it?"

"I think I do," said Steve. "I was concealed in that log there, along with a comrade, when your men built that fire against it. We laid there till late at night, and then escaped by sending a pistol ball through the sentinel's head from the inside of the log. Ere he fell to the ground we were up and away."

"Who are you?" demanded the astonished young officer.

"Steve Stone," was the quiet reply.

The young officer fairly groaned in his chagrin. He turned away and would have nothing to say to any one for several hours.

In the meantime, the other detachments were hunted up by the patriots, and a running fight took place. The redcoats dared not stop to make a stand, knowing that a body of superior numbers might rush upon them at any moment from Valley Forge. They retreated toward Philadelphia in good order, but losing a man every few minutes from the fatal rifles of the Continentals, who followed them almost to the Schuylkill river.

Fearing to go too far, the patriots returned to the camp with their prisoners. They had done good work and captured a fine breakfast, all in a few hours. The sight of a few redcoat prisoners in the camp aroused a little spirit in the half-starved, half frozen patriots. They crowded around to look at them and learn the particulars of their capture from those who had charge of them.

When Steve made his report to the commander-in-chief, he was astonished at the importance attached to his news. He saw that he had picked up information that enabled that astute leader to read the motives of his wily enemy and correctly judge of his future actions.

"Mr. Stone," said General Washington to the spy, "the news you bring, as well as that which you sent by your friend Hardin, is of the utmost importance to the cause of the patriots. I desire you to return to the enemy's camp to-night and watch still more closely his actions. They are about to make a movement, now that spring has come. But in which direction he will move is the secret which I want you to find out. Whatever you need for the trip shall be furnished you by the chief-of-staff."

"Your excellency," said Steve, "I am glad I have done that which pleases you. To advance the cause of my country I am willing to risk my life, not once, but a thousand times."

"You seem to understand so well how to go and come," said the great commander, "that I do not feel that you are running the risk that would be incurred by an ordinary man, Mr. Stone. You well deserve the name your friends have given you—that of Slippery Steve. I hope you may continue to safely slip in and out of the enemy's lines without any danger to yourself."

Steve went in search of Tom Hardin, and found him waiting for orders to go out on the road again. To him he repeated the words of

the commander-in-chief, and expressed his gratification at having done something to merit praise from such a source.

"I am going to start again to night, Tom," he said, "and would like to have you go with me if you are not under orders to go elsewhere."

"I am not under any orders at present," replied Tom, "and would like very much to go with you. I will get permission to do so. I am a pretty good rover by this time."

"Get ready, then, and we will be off in time to reach John Goodman's house before he retires to rest."

Tom obtained the required permission to accompany Slippery Steve on his return to the enemy's lines, and joined him in time for the early start which the latter desired to make.

They lost no time on the way, for the punishment the enemy had received the day before made him cautious how he advanced in that direction. There were then no redcoats on that side of the Schuylkill, unless they were in disguise.

The coast being then clear, our heroes made the distance in good time, and found the old Quaker about to retire for the night. He received them with his usual quiet way, and remarked:

"Thou hast been in great danger since yesterday, Friend Stephen."

"Yes," said Steve, "the redcoats pushed us pretty hard, but we managed to get through, and then came back with some of our friends and gave them some hard blows."

"They that came back seemed to have been smitten hip and thigh," and the old Quaker gave a quiet chuckle as he said it. Though his religion forbade him to go to war, or even encourage it, yet in his patriotic soul he could not but rejoice that the redcoats had been worsted in the encounter.

"We are on our way back, Friend Goodman," said Steve, in a whisper, "and we desire to get across the river as soon as possible."

"Verily, thou shalt go over, thou and thy friend. Remain thou here till I return, and I will tell thee when thou mayest go."

The old Quaker went out, and was gone but a few minutes when he returned, and said:

"Friend Stephen, the enemy is watchful. Two men are beyond the barn who—"

"That's enough, Friend Goodman. We will see who they are," said Steve. "Come, Tom, let's see about it."

"Verily, Friend Stephen, thou must not shed any blood, nor—the lad is gone! Verily, this is a wicked world."

Steve and Tom crept out of the house and dodged into the woods on the right, and in a few moments they were in the rear of the barn mentioned by the old Quaker.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### TOM HARDIN CAPTURED.

On reaching a spot where they could get a view, under the starlight of the space in the rear of the barn, our heroes looked around in search of the two men the old Quaker had seen. They saw nothing to excite their suspicion for some time, and were wondering what had become of them, when Tom saw a dark form creeping round the corner of the barn.

He nudged Steve's arm and pointed at the dark object in the corner of the barn. Steve glanced in that direction, and saw that a man was there watching the cabin of the Quaker.

"Where's the other one?" he whispered to Tom.

"Haven't seen him."

"Let's wait and see if he turns up. Tom, we must take no prisoners to-night."

"No—we can't take care of them."

"Hush-sh!—there's the other one!"

Another man came softly around the corner of the barn and whispered to the first one.

"Come on," whispered Steve, and both started forward.

Hearing footsteps approaching, the two men shrank back under the dark shadow of the barn. Steve and Tom pretended not to see them; but the moment they were within a few feet of them, they wheeled and fired their pistols full in their faces.

The two men, fatally wounded and utterly blinded by the burning powder, staggered back against the barn and then sank down in the quivering agonies of death.

"It was well done, Tom," said Steve. "They were placed here to watch our friend Goodman. Probably every house on this side of



the river is watched in the same way, to see who it is that puts us across when we come and go. We must throw these fellows into the river and let the fishes have them."

They took them up, and in another minute or two the corpses were floating with the current of the Schuylkill.

"Friend Goodman," said Steve, a few minutes later, "you are mistaken! There are no strange men watching your house. I am sure that they have gone down the river."

The old Quaker understood the whole thing. He and his good wife had heard the two pistol shots. It was more than probable that they also heard the splash as the bodies were thrown into the river.

"Verily, this war is a bloody one," said the old Quaker, as he arose and followed Steve out to the spot where he kept his little boat concealed.

"So it is, Friend Goodman," replied the spy, "but all nations are born in blood, and it is not for us to hope that America will be any exception to the rule."

"Nay, thou art right, Friend Stephen. Rivers of blood have already been shed, and the men of war are thirsting for more. Behold, the boat is ready for thee and thy friend."

They entered the boat, and, as the river was now clear of ice, were rowed across without any difficulty.

On the other side Tom wished to run up to his house to see how his wife and children were.

"It is not yet midnight," said Steve. "We have time enough to go. But we may run into a trap, so we must be very cautious."

"We can go up through the woods as we did before. If there are any more watchers there they will be in the woods."

"I think so, too. Come, let's see if there are any there," and they started off up the river in the direction of Tom's Hardin's home.

Up in the woods, where they destroyed four Tory watchers on the occasion of a former visit, they found no intruders, though they searched diligently for them.

"Now, Tom, go down and see your family," said Steve, "and I will keep a watch out here for you. If there is any danger I will give the usual signals to guide you. Go ahead."

Tom shook hands with him, and then crept cautiously down the little slope to his cabin home.

Knocking gently on the door, he heard the frightened voice of his wife asking:

"Who's there?"

"It's me—Tom!" he replied, as loud as he dared to.

"Oh, Heaven be praised!" exclaimed the happy wife and mother, springing out of bed, and rushing to the door to open it. "Tom! Tom!" and the next moment she was folded in the strong arms of her husband.

The children were all soundly sleeping, and so they had an hour in which to talk over the occurrences of the past few weeks. She told him how a squad of redcoats came and questioned her about four men who had been encamped up in the woods. She said she had seen them there, but did not know what had become of them.

"They then asked me where you were, and I told them I did not know, but thought you were at Valley Forge. Then they wanted to know if I had seen you since the night you escaped from them, and I said, 'No.' I will never answer any question that will please them, dear Tom."

"Ah! I am not at all uneasy about you doing anything of that," said Tom. "I am only sorry you have to remain here alone, with only the children for company. Ah! that's a signal from Steve. I am discovered! No—no, don't throw your arms around me—let me go. Don't you hear that signal?"

"Oh, my God, they will murder you, Tom, right before my eyes," moaned his wife, trying to fold him to her heart, as if sheltering him from danger.

"Of course they will if you don't release me. How can I prevent my throat being cut when you hold me this way?"

"Go—go! God save you!" exclaimed the excited wife, releasing him.

Tom snatched a kiss from her lips, and then drew his knife in one hand and pistol in the other.

Steve gave another signal, that Tom knew meant that two men were at the door of his cabin.

Suddenly a sharp knock on the door startled him.

"Who is it?" he asked.

"Open, in the king's name," came from without.

"The king's name has no force here!"

"Open this door, you rebel," was the hoarse command, "or we will burn down the house!"

"Who are you, and what do you want here?" demanded Tom.

"We want *you*, traitor. Open the door, and save the roof that shelters your family; otherwise we will burn down the house."

"You will not disturb my family if I open the door?"

"No—we only want *you*."

Tom then opened the door, and two men armed to the teeth sprang inside and seized him.

"We have you now, you treacherous spy!" exclaimed the taller of the two men.

"Yes," said Tom, "you have me. Hello!" and he wheeled suddenly toward the door.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### THE PERIL OF THE SPY—STRANGE NEWS.

WHEN Tom Hardin exclaimed "hello!" he did it to distract the attention of his two captors; for he saw the face of Steve just outside the door.

As was to be expected, the two men turned quickly and glanced toward the door. The next moment Tom, who had backed up to where he could reach the handle of a hatchet lying on a small table, took up the weapon and clove the skull of the man nearest to him.

The man sank down to the floor, and Tom turned to grapple with the other. Steve sprang to his assistance and sent his knife to the hilt in his back. But he was a powerful fellow, and, though mortally wounded, fought like a tiger till he fell from weakness caused by loss of blood.

Mrs. Hardin remained silent, transfixed with horror at what was going on before her. She expected every moment to see her husband murdered. But when the second man sank down on the floor, and her husband stood over him unhurt, she gave a glad cry and bounded forward.

"Oh, Tom!" she cried, "you are saved again! Saved to me again!"

"Yes, and will stay saved to you and the children," said Tom. "Go and quiet the children now, and don't let them know what has happened. Steve and I will remove these bodies to the river and then wash away the blood stains."

Mrs. Hardin ran to the bed and quieted the children, compelling the two elder ones to remain under the cover until the removals were made.

On taking up the last one Steve discovered that he was yet breathing.

"Ah! I can't throw *him* in the river," he said, as he laid him down on the ground near the water. "I can't drown a wounded man."

"Is he alive yet?" Tom asked, in no little alarm.

"Yes."

"That's too bad. The sooner we have him out of the way the better."

"Yes, I know that. He may die in a few minutes."

Tom knelt down by the wounded man, and listened to his breathing.

"He is very near gone," he said.

Suddenly the wounded man spoke.

"Yes—almost—gone," he said. "Give—me—water."

Steve, as tender-hearted as he was brave, scooped up some water in his cap, and held it to the dying man's lips. He drank it eagerly.

"I am sorry this has happened, sir," said Steve; "but it is the chance of war."

"Yes—yes—I—die—for—my—king!" said the man.

He gave a convulsive gasp, and then a shudder passed over his entire frame.

"He's dead," said Steve.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes."

"Then in he goes," and they both took up the lifeless body and cast it into the river.

"Now, come back to the house," said Tom, "and we'll have something to eat. Those two were set to watch the place, so there is no danger of any more of them turning up before morning."



"But we must get into the city long before morning," said Steve, as he slowly wended his way back to the house.

"So we must. I'll be ready to go in a few minutes."

They entered the house to find Mrs. Hardin washing up the blood stains on the floor. She soon finished the job, and then prepared a meal for the two brave men.

An hour later they were on their way toward the enemy's lines.

As good fortune would have it, a very heavy cloud came up and obscured the starlight until it was almost pitchy dark. They found no trouble in walking across the line when the sentinel's back was turned.

Both of them being familiar with the roads outside the city, as well as the streets within, they found little difficulty in making their way to any point they desired to reach.

The only place they dared to go to was the home of Bill Hines, the patriot carpenter whom the redcoats had not yet suspected.

They found Hines and his wife up preparing the morning's meal, for day was just beginning to dawn.

Hines grasped their hands and gave them a cordial welcome.

"Steve," he said, "you are just in time to render assistance to Mrs. Simms and her daughter."

"My God, Bill," gasped Steve, "what has happened to them?"

"They have had a great deal of trouble since you saw them last."

"How? What has happened? Tell me, and don't keep me in suspense about it."

"Well, Mrs. Floyd and her daughter got a half dozen soldiers very drunk and led them to Simms' door, and sent them in to rob the house and abuse Becky and her mother."

"My God!" groaned Steve.

"They robbed the house of everything of value and then assaulted Becky. She seized a hatchet and slew one of them on the spot. The others then fled. Becky and her mother were both arrested, and are now locked up and under guard."

Steve groaned in anguish. He passionately loved Becky, and the story of her misfortunes staggered him for a few minutes.

"Good Heavens!" he exclaimed; "who would have thought that a woman's hate against one of her own sex would have carried her so far?"

"They are enraged because Ben Floyd is still in prison," remarked Martha Hines.

"Yes, I know," said Steve. "I'll give them a taste of prison life that will make 'em wish they had never known Bob Simms' wife and daughter."

"It's perfectly awful," said Martha.

"Yes," assented Steve. "War is bad enough when left to men to wage it; but when women get mixed up in it, the horrors are intensified a thousand fold."

"Two of the drunken soldiers who were in the party that night," said Bill Hines, "have confessed the whole thing, and taken all the blame away from Becky and her mother. They would have been released yesterday, I think, were it not that Bob had made his escape. They want to punish him a little through them."

Breakfast was prepared, and the party of four sat down to partake of it. Neither Steve nor Tom was very hungry, both having eaten heartily at midnight.

After breakfast they put on disguises and walked about the city, picking up all the bits of news that were found floating about in the taverns and other places of resort. They even went so far as to visit the headquarters of General Sir Henry Clinton, who had succeeded General Howe as commander-in-chief of the British army. There they discovered that some great movement was on foot, but of what nature and in which direction they could form no idea. They dared not ask any questions, since to do so would expose them to suspicion.

While standing around near a group of officers, Steve heard one of them addressed as Colonel Allison. He looked around quickly, and saw a tall, fine-looking man in the uniform of a colonel standing within a few feet of him.

"Ah!" he said to himself, "I have a message which I promised to deliver to Colonel Allison, from Captain Hardwick, who died by my hand in the little cabin upon the banks of the Delaware. It won't do to deliver it now and here, but I will take a good look at him, so I will know him."

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### SLIPPERY STEVE VISITS THE FLOYDS AND HEARS SOMETHING ABOUT HIMSELF.

COLONEL ALLISON was a brave, dashing officer of the British army, handsome, and a great favorite with the ladies of the Tory families. As our hero gazed at him, when he stood among a group of officers, he turned and caught his eye. Steve turned and walked away, and Allison, for a moment, wondered why he had been stared at so steadily. He felt almost tempted to follow and question him.

Steve, however, moved away, and, in company with Tom Hardin, walked about the city during the day, looking in every direction for news. He heard much that was of importance and still more that was not.

At last, when night came, Steve determined to pay the Floyds a visit.

"You will get into trouble as sure as you do, Steve," said Martha Hines.

"Tom will go along and keep watch for me outside," replied Steve.

"Yes," said Tom. "You did that for me."

They left Hines' house and made their way to the house where Ben Floyd's wife and daughter were living. As they passed the late residence of Bob Simms, they saw that the house had been gutted of nearly everything. Steve's face flushed with burning indignation as he made the discovery, and he said to Tom:

"And all this came of two women's hate."

"Women are good haters when they hate one another," remarked Tom.

"They do, indeed. They have no mercy on each other. Now, Tom, there isn't any watcher around here, but you had better keep a sharp lookout for me all the same. I am going into Floyd's house and have a talk with them."

Steve went round to the rear door of the house and gently tapped on it. Mrs. Floyd opened it and asked what was wanted.

"I am a loyal man, ma'am," he said, "and a stranger in the city. When I left home I was given a message by a neighbor to give to one Simms, who lived next door to you here. But I find the house empty and no one about. Can you give me any information about them, ma'am?"

"Indeed I can," said she, her eyes snapping viciously. "Come in and sit down, and I can tell you where they are."

He entered and seated himself in front of the cozy fire. Alice came in a moment later and seated herself near her mother.

"Mr. Bob Simms is a rebel," began Mrs. Floyd, as soon as she was well settled in her chair. "He was arrested and thrown into prison for giving information to Washington's spies. They were going to hang him, but one of the rebel spies, named Steve Stone, got him out by a mean trick, and aided his escape across the lines. They do say that Stone is Becky Simms' lover, and it's a nice couple they are! He a rebel against his king, and she no better than she ought to be."

"Indeed, ma'am," said Steve, "I am very sorry to hear of any one being in so much trouble. Where are Mrs. Simms and her daughter, now?"

"Why, they are in prison, too. Why, bless your life, sir, they are the worst-tempered women in the world. The other night some of the king's soldiers paid them a visit. Becky gave them all manner of encouragement, and then, just because one of them caught her round the waist and kissed her, she took up a hatchet and split his head open—killing him on the spot."

"Killed one the king's soldiers!" exclaimed Steve, in well-feigned amazement.

"Yes, sir, the shameless hussy. The king's officers had both mother and daughter arrested, and they are now in prison, where they should have been months ago."

"You don't seem to have any sympathy for your neighbors, ma'am," he remarked, looking her full in the face.

"Sympathy!" exclaimed Alice Floyd, with a scornful curve of her pretty lip. "We have sympathy for deserving people, but not for such as *they*. No, indeed!"

"I suppose their home is entirely broken up and destroyed?"

"Yes—they will be penniless beggars when they come out of prison, if indeed they ever do."

"That is bad indeed. Their friends will be very much pained to hear such news."

"They don't deserve to have any friends," snapped Mrs. Floyd.



"Their friends speak very highly of them," remarked Steve.

"That's because they know nothing of their conduct since the king's troops came into the city."

"I hope none of their neighbors had any hand in bringing about their misfortunes," he remarked.

"Not that I know of," said she.

"Becky gave herself too many airs," said Alice, "and tried to flirt with every good-looking officer that passed the house."

"That's a privilege of the sex, is it not?" and he looked hard at her when he asked the question. She flushed a little under his gaze and remarked:

"Even if it is, there is a limit beyond which a lady will never go."

"Did she go beyond that limit?"

"Who? Becky Simms? She was never regarded by anybody as a lady. They are very common—very common indeed, sir."

Just then they were startled by a rap on the front door.

Mrs. Floyd arose and answered it.

"Why, Colonel Allison!" she exclaimed, her face all smiles.

"Come in! We didn't expect to see you to-night, of all men."

The tall, handsome officer came in, bowing and smiling, and the door closed behind him. Alice Floyd sprang up and gave him a smiling welcome that would have pleased even the most exacting lover. She extended her hand, which he took and gallantly kissed.

Mrs. Floyd set a chair for him so that he sat next to her daughter. Steve tumbled to the scheme at once. The mother was trying to bring about a match between them, and the daughter was evidently not averse to it. The officer, though, had no such ideas in his head. On the contrary, he was plotting the ruin of the girl.

"This gentleman," said Mrs. Floyd, pointing to Steve, "has come from somewhere in the country to see the Simms family next door, and finding the house empty, called here for information about them. I have just been telling him what a horrid family they are."

The officer glanced at Steve. Then he scrutinized him from head to foot, and asked:

"Are you a friend of the Simms'?"

"I am neither friend nor enemy, not knowing them. I am simply a bearer of a message from a friend of the family to Mrs. Simms."

"Well, I can give you some additional news, perhaps," said the colonel. "Mrs. Simms and daughter were declared innocent of any wrong-doing this afternoon."

"Goodness!" gasped Mrs. Floyd. "Is that so?"

"Yes, madam, and General Clinton apologized to her like the grand gentleman that he is, and ordered his chief of staff to pay her for all the losses she has sustained."

"Ah! Sir Henry is not so bad as I have heard him painted," said Steve.

"He is a noble-hearted man," said the colonel, "but very severe on rebels."

"She will make him pay ten times the value of her old, worn out trumpery," said Mrs. Floyd, in a very spiteful tone.

"You seem to have very bitter feelings against your neighbor, ma'am," remarked Steve.

"I have good reasons for it," she snapped.

"Maybe you didn't bring about her imprisonment on account of your feeling in that direction."

"What's that to you, sir? I would thank you to get out of my house. If the truth was known you'd be found as arrant a rebel as Bob Simms himself."

"Indeed you do me an injustice, ma'am," said Steve, very mildly.

"Come, sir, leave my house! You have heard all there is to be heard about the Simms'. You can call on them now for the rest. I daresay you can find them in some rebel's house."

"Can you tell me where I can find Mrs. Simms, colonel?"

"I cannot, sir," was the polite reply of the officer. "She went away with some friends about sunset. But stay, sir. Have you a pass to enter the city?"

"No, sir."

"How did you get here, then?"

"I came in a wagon with two farmers, who had passes, I guess, as the guards let us pass. By the way, colonel, do you command the — regiment in his majesty's service?"

"Yes, sir. I have that honor."

"Then I have a message to deliver to you. Captain Hardwick, of

your regiment, received a death wound last winter, up the river, and with his latest breath requested me to give you this watch, and say that he died in defense of his king;" and with that he drew a gold watch from his pocket and handed it to the astonished officer.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

DEATH OF COLONEL ALLISON—STEVE AND BECKY AGAIN.

COLONEL ALLISON gazed at the watch for a few moments, as if dazed. Then he drew his hand across his forehead, as if trying to recall something to mind.

"Yes, this is poor Hardwick's watch," he said. "He was as brave a man as ever drew sword in defense of his king. We did not know what had become of him, but hoped that nothing worse than capture had befallen him. How was he wounded, sir?" and he turned to Steve and looked him full in the face.

"He and a comrade had taken possession of a hut on the river bank," replied Steve, "which belonged to a fisherman suspected of aiding the rebel spies to get over to the west side. They laid in wait to catch any spies that might come along, and the next day they caught Steve Stone—known as Slippery Steve."

"Good Lord!" exclaimed Alice Floyd, "that's Becky Simms' lover."

"They caught him, did you say, sir?" the colonel asked.

"Yes, sir. But at an unlucky moment the spy seized weapons, killed one outright and mortally wounded the other, which was Captain Hardwick. I have been carrying that watch ever since, waiting for a chance to deliver it to you, colonel."

Colonel Allison stared at him in profound silence for several minutes, and Steve, knowing what was passing in his mind, returned his gaze unflinchingly.

"You are a bold, daring man, Mr. Stone," said the officer, breaking the silence. "If you had not voluntarily placed yourself in my power by returning me this from a dead friend, I would turn you over to the gibbet to suffer as you deserve."

"You could not do that, colonel. You are in *my* power, not me in yours. I have confederates outside, and——"

Mrs. Floyd and Alice were nearly paralyzed with horror.

"Oh, my God!" she groaned; "it's Steve Stone, and we are all lost!"

"No, ma'am," said Steve, "you are in no danger whatever. You never heard in your life that Steve Stone ever harmed a woman, and he will not begin with such as *you*."

"Sir!" exclaimed the officer, "these ladies are under my protection. You insult them at your peril!"

"Tut—tut, colonel! You don't regard 'em as ladies. You are playing a game. I understand it all. Don't put on any airs with me, for it won't do. I don't want any trouble with you. I wish to say to these women, however, that if they don't change their conduct toward Bob Simms' family they will see more trouble than Job had, that's all. That's what I came here to tell 'em. I understand why she has been so bitter against them, and if she doesn't let up I'll——"

"You savage wretch!" hissed Colonel Allison, drawing his sword; "surrender, or I'll run you through."

"Softly, colonel!" and Steve presented a brace of pistols at his head.

The enraged officer heeded him not.

He rushed forward, and the next moment a pistol-ball crashed through his brain.

He fell prone on the floor, and Alice Floyd sank down in a death-like swoon.

Mrs. Floyd was so terror-stricken that she buried her face in her hands, and sank into a large arm-chair.

Steve promptly seized the body of the dead officer and dragged it forward near the fire-place, and then turned and left the house.

"What's the matter in there, Steve?" Tom asked, as he rejoined him.

"I killed that officer. He wanted to run me through, and I very naturally objected. Come on; we must get away from here. Ah! here come some redcoats; I'll give 'em a flea in their ears."

Running up to the redcoats, who proved to be a party of officers returning from a social gathering, he said:

"Gentlemen, a king's officer has just been murdered in yonder house."

"Which house?" exclaimed one of the redcoats.



"That one there, where you see the light in two windows. He was hugging a young lady and trying to kiss her against her consent. Her mother must have shot him."

The officers ran forward and broke in the door of the house. They were horrified at seeing the body of Colonel Allison lying in a pool of blood.

"Who did this?" one of them demanded.

"Steve Stone, the rebel spy!" cried Mrs. Floyd.

"Steve Stone!" exclaimed the entire party. "Where is he?" and every man drew his sword.

"He ran away as soon as he fired the shot."

"Ah! Madam, that story won't do. Stone is a bad man, but also a shrewd one. He would not dare do such a thing in our lines. *You* are the murderess, madam! You shot him for trying to kiss your daughter."

She gave a shriek and swooned away, for she saw how difficult it would be to prove her innocence, since Steve had, doubtless, told them that she had done it.

When she came to she found that the body had been taken away, and the house surrounded by soldiers, who told her that she and her daughter were prisoners.

She wept, raved, and loudly proclaimed her innocence, but all in vain. She and Alice were carried to prison the next day and locked up on the charge of having murdered the most popular officer in the British army.

In the meantime Steve and Tom returned to Bill Hines' and went to bed, after telling Bill and Martha what had happened at the Floyd cottage.

"That's an awful charge, Steve," said Martha, "and they may hang her for it."

"Oh, I wouldn't let 'em do that. I would own up and save her at the last moment. But *she* would have let Becky and her mother be hanged and quartered without explaining a word about their case."

The next day Steve disguised himself as an old woman and went round to Simms' house, hoping to see Becky or her mother turn up there. He did not have to wait long ere they both came, accompanied by an officer, who had been appointed to ascertain what damage had been done to house and furniture. Steve waited around till the officer got a list of missing things and had gone. Then he stepped up to Becky and made an awkward curtsy.

"Please, miss, can ye give a poor woman some work to do?"

"No, ma'am," said Becky, very promptly; "we have plenty of work to do, but as we have no money with which to pay any one, we are compelled to do it ourselves."

"God bless your sweet face, honey," said the disguised lover, "I'll work for ye all the days of me life if ye will only let me."

"But we can't pay you anything, ma'am."

"I won't ask you for any money."

"Oh, we couldn't think of letting any one work for us for nothing."

"Just give me a kiss, darling, and I will work the rest of my life for you," and as he spoke the last few words in his natural voice, Becky sprang forward, snatched off the old bonnet Martha Hines had placed on his head, and exclaimed:

"Yes, a thousand kisses, you dear, good, old soul!" and she threw her arms around his neck and nearly smothered him with kisses.

Mother and daughter received him with a glad welcome, and heard with tears of joy that Bob Simms was safe at Valley Forge, and in good health.

Steve aided them all day in putting the house to rights, snatching a kiss from Becky on the sly every time a chance afforded.

The British commander kept his word with Mrs. Simms, and had her house refurnished, as he had promised. The goods came and were delivered under the supervision of a guard of two soldiers.

One of the guards wanted to make love to Becky, and followed her about the house, complimenting her good looks, and trying to steal a kiss from her.

Steve was in a rage, but didn't wish to make a row and thus get the family into another wrangle with the military. But at last he said to the soldier:

"You're a handsome man, Mr. Soldier, but if you're a gentleman you'll behave like one."

"How now, old woman!" exclaimed the soldier. "You are not jealous, are you? I'll wager you were frisky enough yourself a hundred years ago."

"I'm frisky enough to give ye a good spanking, young man, if you give me any impudence," was the retort.

"Hanged if I don't kiss the old gal!" and the jolly soldier seized Steve and undertook to kiss him. The next moment he found himself flying head-foremost through the open window.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### THE ASTONISHED REDCOAT.

THE reader will recollect the discomfiture of the red-coated soldier at the end of the preceding chapter.

The dumfounded Briton went through the open window like a rocket.

He landed on his head, and the concussion caused him to see more stars than he ever dreamed were in the heavens.

When he picked himself up he glared around to see if the house was still there.

He thought a thunderbolt had struck it.

As he glanced around at the house he looked toward the window through which he had made his exit, and beheld the placid countenance of the old woman who had fired him out.

"My good soldier-man," she said, "do pray tell me if ye are hurt! It will break me old heart if I hurt ye. Come in and kiss me and I'll marry ye, for I love a man who is not afraid of a woman. Will ye pardon me and come in, Mr. Soldier?"

"Good Lord deliver me!" gasped the soldier, hastening away about as fast as his battered condition would allow.

The moment he was out of sight Becky Simms, who had been on the verge of an explosion of laughter for five minutes or more, threw her arms around the pretended old woman's neck, and covered the face under the bonnet with kisses.

How could she help it? Her mother was so convulsed with laughter that she did not see the salutes.

"You dear, saucy fellow!" she exclaimed, kissing him a dozen times, "what if you had broken his neck?"

"Well, that would not have broken your heart, would it?" he replied.

"No; but I am glad you didn't, though."

"So am I. I didn't mean to hurt him much. Ha, ha, ha! Didn't he go through that window in a hurry, though?"

"Yes, indeed," and mother and daughter joined heartily in the laugh at the expense of the redcoat.

Steve then assisted them in placing the house in order, during which time he told the story of the new trouble that had overtaken Mrs. Floyd and Alice, on account of the dead body of Colonel Allison being found in their house.

Becky looked hard at him while he was talking, and finally asked:

"Didn't *you* have something to do with that?"

"Becky," he replied, in a serious tone of voice, "these are times when men have to be very cautious about what they say. My rule is to keep my eyes and ears open, and my mouth shut. Do you wish this table pushed over in that corner?"

Becky and her mother exchanged significant glances, and made no more comments on the Floyds.

Two hours later a couple of soldiers came to the house and demanded admittance.

"What do you want here?" Steve demanded, imitating a woman's voice to perfection.

"We want to see Mrs. Simms on business," was the reply.

"Land sakes alive!" exclaimed Steve. "Will you soldiers never let us poor women alone? Ye can't come in here! There's no men folks at home."

"But we must come in," was the reply, "and if you don't open this door we'll break it down."

"Oh, mercy, Steve!" whispered Becky to the daring spy, "they have come for you!"

"Of course they have, duck," was the reply, "but leave 'em to me. I'll manage 'em, see if I don't."

"Will you open this door, Mrs. Simms?" the redcoat asked.

"Yes, I will," answered Steve. "I don't see what you soldiers are always bothering us women for," and then he flung open the door with an angry motion.

The two soldiers rushed in.

"Which is Mrs. Simms?" one of them asked.

"I am Mrs. Simms," said Becky's mother.



"Then this is the person we want," and the soldier turned and grabbed Steve by the arm.

"Oh, Lord, I shall faint!" cried Steve, acting as if he really was in danger of swooning on the spot.

"Come, now, don't do that, old lady," exclaimed the redcoat, with a puzzled look on his face.

"Oh, don't take her away, please," pleaded Becky, with tears in her eyes.

She well knew that capture meant death to the brave spy.

"We must obey orders, miss," said one of the redcoats. "She threw one of the king's soldiers out of the window and wounded him badly. The king's officers want to know all about it, and——"

"Oh, they can come here and hear all about how it occurred, and——"

"But they sent us to fetch her," said the soldier, interrupting her. "So come on, old lady, and don't make any fuss about it."

Believing him to be really a woman, the two soldiers were careless with their arms. Steve saw it, and in a flash he tripped them both so dexterously that they fell to the floor very heavily.

Steve darted out of the house by the back door, dodged round the corner, and was over the fence and into the yard of the Floyds in a trice. Ere the two redcoats regained their feet Steve was out of sight and away.

"A spy! A spy!" cried both soldiers, as they sprang up. "Shoot him! Shoot him!"

They glared around the room for a moment, and then darted out of the house.

Becky smiled, for she had seen her lover go over the fence and get away.

The redcoats ran around the house like boys playing a game of tag. But a few minutes sufficed to convince them that the disguised patriot had made his escape.

"Mrs. Simms," said one, as they returned to the house, "who was that man?"

"He is a friend of our family," was the cautious reply.

"Why was he in disguise?"

"To avoid trouble. He was suspected of being in sympathy with the rebels."

"Well, it may cause you more trouble," was the reply, "as I shall have to tell the captain all about it."

"I am sure we are in no way to blame, sir."

"So I think, ma'am. You couldn't help him coming here, but the king's officers may think differently."

"I hope not, sir. Oh, we have had so much trouble," and the trembling woman burst into tears.

The soldiers turned and abruptly left the house, as if to avoid the sight of a woman's tears, and in a few minutes the mother and daughter were alone together.

In the meantime, Steve Stone had effected an entrance into the house of the Floyds, where he discarded the old woman's dress and reappeared in his own proper garb. Then he proceeded to get away from that very dangerous locality as quickly as possible.

Knowing that it was believed that he was the lover of Becky Simms, he concluded that desperate efforts would be made to capture him, and hence concluded not to attempt to cross the lines for several days.

In another disguise he lingered about the places where the British officers congregated, pretending to be selling a few articles needed by men in camp. In that way he picked up a great deal of information. Suddenly he heard a word or two from an officer in the uniform of a general that set him to thinking.

Some new movement was on foot, and the next day he saw that an unusual activity prevailed in the British camp.

"Ah!" he muttered to himself; "they are up to something. I must go to Valley Forge to-night to see if the good man up there can't have something to say about it."

That night Slippery Steve made his way toward the lines, determined to go across at every hazard. On reaching the pickets, however, he found such extraordinary precautions had been taken as to utterly preclude any possibility of his getting through.

"That's a sure sign that something is going to happen," he muttered. "I must go the other way and cross the Delaware, though it may detain me longer."

Turning back, he made his way to the Delaware river. The pickets there had not been augmented to any perceptible degree, and in a lit-

tle while he managed to get a boat from a fisherman, who recognized the password.

Once on the other side, he lost no time in making his way up to the cabin where Captain Hardwick, of the British army, had lost his life. There he found Ferguson, the fisherman, and in half an hour he was on the west bank of the Delaware again.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

"LIBERTY FOR ALL!—WASHINGTON HAS COME!"

THE ground being now clear of snow, Slippery Steve made good time in getting over to the Schuylkill, though he had to tramp many a weary mile to get there. He passed the house of old Farmer Grover, where he had been compelled to fight for his life against two British officers. The old Tory, he well knew, had never forgiven him for that night's work. For all that he had a great desire to stop and see pretty Melissa Grover, and ask her a few questions. But time was pressing. Great events were about to happen, and there was another river to cross ere he could feel that it was safe for him to go in that direction.

When he reached the Schuylkill he was amazed at what he found. The river bank for miles, on that side, was strongly guarded by British pickets.

"Ah! I can't cross here," he muttered. "I will keep in the woods and go farther up the river."

Keeping well back in the woods so as not to run foul of any of the enemy's pickets, Slippery Steve pushed forward with all the speed he could command. It was high noon ere he reached a point above the enemy's guard line. There were no boats anywhere about, every one having been destroyed by the redcoats.

"Valley Forge is but a few miles above here," said Steve. "I can soon dry my clothes. I will swim across and make the camp as quickly as I can."

Without losing any time thinking about it, he plunged boldly in and swam across. The river was not wide at that point, and in ten minutes he was safe on the other side.

Then, to prevent any ill effects from the cold bath, he ran for over a mile at the top of his speed. A healthy perspiration prevented him from taking cold. An hour later he had reached the picket line of the patriot army and was conducted to the headquarters of the commander-in-chief, to whom he made his report.

General Washington was amazed at what he heard, and was lost in deep reverie for some minutes after Steve had ceased talking. Then he asked several questions, and found that the cunning spy was consistent in his story. Two hours later other spies and scouts came in with reports that corroborated all that Steve had said. A smile of serene satisfaction lit up the face of the commander-in-chief as he found the news confirmed.

That night there was great activity in the camp at Valley Forge. It was plain that the camp was going to be broken up and the army move elsewhere—probably to meet the enemy. The men were in the highest spirits, half-starved and ragged as they were. They knew not where they were going, but it was enough for them to know that they were leaving a spot where they had passed a winter of unparalleled suffering.

The next morning the news came that Sir Henry Clinton and his army were leaving Philadelphia and retreating on New York. Washington immediately set his army in motion and marched toward the city.

Such rejoicing as there was among the patriots when Washington reached the Schuylkill! They came out by thousands to welcome them to the city.

Bob Simms and Tom Hardin, with many hundreds of others, hastened forward to meet their families and rejoice in the happiness of being restored to each other once more.

Steve reached Simms' house even before Bob himself, and clasped Becky and her mother in his arms. He was even happy enough to hug his future mother-in-law.

"Where is Robert? Where is my husband, Steve Stone?" cried the happy Mrs. Simms, as she saw the armed host of Washington enter the city.

"He is coming—will soon be here," replied Steve, helping himself to another kiss from Becky.

Bob soon hastened to his home, and was clasped in the arms of his wife and daughter.



"Ah!" he said, "I can once more be in the bosom of my family without the fear of being hung for loving my country."

"Where are the Floyds?" Slippery Steve asked of Becky.

"Indeed I don't know. The British may have left them all in prison. If they did, they must be half famished by this time."

"I must go and see about that," said Steve, suddenly rising and preparing to leave.

"I will go with you."

"What! You go to see the Floyds?"

"Yes. I bear them no malice now. I know it will be punishment enough that they have already suffered."

"I should think so, too," said Mrs. Simms, who could not indulge an angry feeling in the midst of so much rejoicing.

Becky carried some provisions with her to the prison to give to such of the prisoners as were in need of them. Steve, being acquainted with the chief of staff, managed to get an order for the release of all the prisoners to be found in the prisons. He hastened to throw open the prison doors to the half famished captives, and cried:

"Liberty for all! Washington has come!"

"Glory be to God!" cried an old patriot, who had been locked up for praying for the Continental Congress and patriot army. The prisoners crowded around the daring spy and heard the news with glad hearts. They made the welkin ring with their shouts, and then rushed out to breathe the air of freedom.

Ben Floyd was there among the prisoners. He was as glad to get out as any of the others. Becky pointed him out to Steve.

"Mr. Floyd," said Steve, "come this way, if you please."

He saw Becky Simms and turned pale as death. He feared the vengeance of her friends for the wrongs she and her mother had suffered at the hands of him and his family.

"Where are your wife and daughter, Mr. Floyd?" Steve asked.

"I—I don't know, sir," was the faltering reply. "Were they locked up, too?"

"Yes, they have been prisoners for over a week."

Ben Floyd staggered backward as if stricken a terrible blow.

"My God!" he groaned, "and we were such loyal friends of the king, too! Oh, how unjust! May the curse of God fall upon those who did this! Henceforth I shall be the bitterest enemy of the king in all America. Down with the king! Long live the Continental Congress!"

"Ah! that's the way to talk!" exclaimed Steve, grasping his hand. "King George cares nothing for America except to wring all the taxes he can out of the people. We are looking for your wife and daughter. Becky, here, has some provisions for them, knowing that they would need them."

Ben Floyd turned to Becky with tears in his eyes.

"Becky Simms," he faltered, "forgive me! God bless you! I am your friend for life," and he broke down completely and sobbed like a child.

"I forgive everything and everybody, Mr. Floyd," said Becky, extending her hand to him. "We shall be friends henceforth."

He seized her hand and pressed it to his lips, murmuring:

"God bless you, Becky Simms!"

"Come," said Steve, "we must find out where the ladies are and release them," and he led the way out on the street. There he learned that there were a few prisoners kept in the building adjoining the main prison. He hastened there and ordered the door to be broken down.

Ben Floyd was the first man to rush in when the door fell. He caught his wife in his arms and pressed her to his heart. Steve and Becky rushed forward to where Alice Floyd stood.

"Alice," said Becky, "the redcoats are gone, and Washington's army is in the city. See, I have brought you and your mother something nice to eat. Everybody is so happy that I couldn't help coming. Steve Stone went with me and released your father."

Alice was amazed. Then tears came into her eyes, and she threw herself in Becky's arms and kissed her. Mrs. Floyd heard all from her husband. She came forward and kissed Becky.

"Madam," Steve remarked, "here are provisions. Help yourself."

"Oh, you wretch!" cried Mrs. Floyd, on recognizing his voice, "you are the cause of our arrest!"

"How!"

"You slew Colonel Allison in our house."

"Would you have me let him make a corpse of me? Do you blame me for not allowing him to kill me?"

"You came there for that purpose."

"Not so, ma'am. Have you suffered any more than you made Mrs. Simms suffer? If you are not satisfied——"

"Oh, we are satisfied, Mr. Stone," said Ben Floyd, quickly interrupting him, "and we are no longer partisans of the king. I was loyal, and yet they ill-treated us. Henceforth we are with the Continental Congress."

"That's right. We are to be the best of friends, then."

Becky forced Alice and her mother to partake of the provisions she had brought to them. They ate hastily, yet heartily, and then left the prison for their home, accompanied by the spy and his sweetheart.

On the way back they met old John Goodman, the Quaker. His rubicund countenance was wreathed in smiles.

"Ah, Friend Stephen!" he exclaimed. "The men of blood have fled, and Friend George has come. Verily, the day of liberty is dawning on our country."

## CHAPTER XXX.

### CONCLUSION.

SLIPPERY STEVE was not to have an easy time so soon after the retreat of the enemy from Philadelphia, as his valuable services were required in watching the movements of Sir Henry Clinton. General Washington knew that he could slip in and out of the enemy's lines with more ease and safety than any other man in the patriot army, and therefore sent Tom Hardin to hunt him up and tell him to report to headquarters at once.

Steve was with Bob Simms and his family when Tom found him.

"Steve," said Tom, with a very long face, "I have some very bad news for you."

"Mercy!" exclaimed Becky, turning very pale. "What is it?"

"He is ordered to report to headquarters at once," was the reply.

"Is that all?" Steve asked.

"Isn't that enough? I know you don't want any duty to do except to hang around Miss Simms here for a week or two."

They all laughed, and Steve grasped his hand and shook it warmly.

"You are right, Tom," he said. "I would rather hang round Becky here and snatch a kiss from her once in a while than to be following the rascally redcoats all over the country."

Becky blushed red as a rose, and clapped her hand over his mouth.

"You talk too much, Steve," she said. "When are you going away again?"

"Are you anxious for me to go, Becky?"

"Yes, if you talk that way while here."

"Then I won't talk so. I must go and see what is wanted," and throwing his arm around her neck, he kissed her as only an ardent lover could kiss, and turned away accompanied by Tom Hardin.

"Have you been up to see your family, Tom?" Steve asked, as they walked along.

"Yes. They are all well and happy."

"Glad to hear that. Can you go with me if I am sent out to follow the redcoats?"

"Yes. I guess I can."

At headquarters Steve learned that he was to be sent to follow up the British army and glean all the information he could in regard to their movements.

Having received his instructions, he at once set out to cross the Delaware. As he reached the banks of the river, he met a man with a cartload of vegetables, which he had driven into the city for the purpose of distributing among the soldiers of the patriot army. The ragged, hungry soldiers crowded around the cart and received the welcome gifts with great eagerness.

"Ah, boys!" said the generous farmer, as he dealt out the vegetables, "I know what a hungry time ye had all winter. I had two boys with ye, and they said as how they were e'enmost starved to death sometimes."

"They told ye the truth, old man!" exclaimed one of the soldiers in the crowd. "We're all hungry yet."

"Thank God ye ain't up thar no more now. Things is on the move. Them redcoats is going New York, and I hope they will have the good sense to leave the country forever."

The soldiers applauded his remarks and accepted his vegetables.



Something in his voice caused Slippery Steve to stop and listen to what he was saying. He noticed that the farmer was distributing a cart-load of vegetables to the half-famished soldiers. As he listened, the spy became more and more puzzled. He found the farmer's voice more and more familiar to his ears.

"I have heard that voice before somewhere," he said to Tom, who stood by his side and listened also.

"Isn't it strange, though," observed Tom, "that he is the only farmer whose love of the cause of liberty is stronger than his love of vegetables? He is the only one to give 'em away."

"That is just what I was thinking," returned Steve. "He is over-doing the thing. I don't believe he is a patriot at all, but a British spy."

"The thunder you say!"

"Yes. He isn't what he seems, and I'm sure I've met him before somewhere. His voice is strangely familiar to me."

"Well, what are you going to do?"

"Wait and see if I cannot locate him."

"But we are under orders to——"

"So we are, but if we capture a spy in our camp we will be commended for our zeal. If we lose a few hours, and it is not found out, we will never be scolded."

"That's true, as we found out when we were boys," remarked Tom, smiling.

Steve hung his head, closed his eyes and listened to the man's voice. He was straining memory to her utmost tension, through the medium of his tympanum.

"Ah! I have him now," he exclaimed, in a low tone of voice. "He and a party of disguised redcoats captured Bob Simms and myself at midnight as we were on our way back to Valley Forge. They were within three miles of our lines. It was the night we hid in a hollow log. I know him now, the sly dog."

"Are you sure of it, Steve?"

"Yes. I actually talked him into the belief that Bob and I were two British spies in pursuit of Slippery Steve, and made an engagement to meet him at a certain ale-house in Shippen street the next night and drink the king's health in foaming tankards of ale. Oh, I can't be mistaken. Just wait and see me give him a shock."

Steve made his way through the crowd around the cart and said, in a very familiar tone of voice:

"Hello! You've turned farmer, have you? Come down to Shippen street and drink that tankard of ale with me."

The pretended farmer looked hard at him. The voice puzzled him, and he asked:

"Did I promise to drink any ale with you, friend?"

"Yes; the night you stopped me on the road up near Valley Forge. I got away from you by making you believe I was in pursuit of Slippery Steve, the patriot spy. You remember it, don't you?"

The farmer turned white as a sheet, and said in a hoarse voice:

"No. I never saw you before."

"Oh, that won't do. I know you. Come, you must go with me to headquarters and——"

"Oh, he's a friend of the cause," exclaimed a soldier; "let him alone."

"Yes—yes—let him alone," chorused the whole crowd.

"You are right, friends," said the pretended farmer, "there's no better friend to the cause than I am."

"I am Slippery Steve," said Steve, "and know I am right. You are a spy!"

At the mention of his name the crowd cheered, for the stories of his many hair-breadth escapes had been told so often around patriot camp-fires that every patriot soldier was familiar with his history. Tom Hardin kept his eye on the spy and drew his pistol, suspecting his intentions.

Quick as a flash the spy drew his pistol and fired at Steve. The bullet cut a lock of hair from his head.

The spy leaped from the cart, hoping to make his escape in the confusion that followed his shot. Tom was on him in an instant with a pistol at his head.

"Just be quiet now," Tom remarked, "or I'll quiet you forever."

Steve led him to headquarters and turned him over. A staff officer took charge of him, and Steve and Tom again started out to follow the British army. The whole patriot army followed the next day, save a garrison that was left in charge of the city.

Washington pursued Sir Henry Clinton, and at Monmouth Court House fought a desperate battle with him. Neither side obtained any very decided advantage, though the British could afford to lose more men than their opponents.

Just as the last shots were being fired between the two armies Steve Stone fell, wounded by a musket ball.

Tom Hardin rushed to his side, and kneeling by him, asked:

"Steve, is it a bad hurt?"

"Yes, Tom; I fear I am done for."

"My God, that can't be! Such a brave man must not die so young."

Tom hurried off for a surgeon. He found one, and then came back to him.

"It is not necessarily fatal," said the surgeon, on examining the wound, "but he will need careful nursing to get him on his feet again."

He was moved to a patriot farmer's house near the battle-field. Tom at once wrote to Becky Simms to come and nurse him.

"You alone can keep him alive," he said.

Four days later Becky was by his bedside, with her lips glued to his.

"Darling," she said, "I will be your nurse."

"Bring the chaplain," said Steve. "If I die you'll be a widow; if I get well I'll have a wife."

The chaplain came and married them, and then Becky set to work to save her husband from the grave. How she watched him day and night wasting away; how she anticipated his every want; how her heart grew light and happy when she saw him growing strong and well again!

Three months later she carried him back to her home, and kept him there till he was able to go into the field again. A year later Becky presented him with a bouncing boy, whom they called George Washington Stone.

Strange to say the Floyds became the fast friends of the Simms'. Steve selected a young man for Alice. He fell in love with her and married her. Bill and Martha Hines continued to be the friends of Steve and Becky till they died, which occurred when Washington was president of a free people.

Steve and Becky lived to celebrate a golden wedding, with children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren around them, to whom they often told the story of SLIPPERY STEVE, THE CUNNING SPY OF THE REVOLUTION.





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